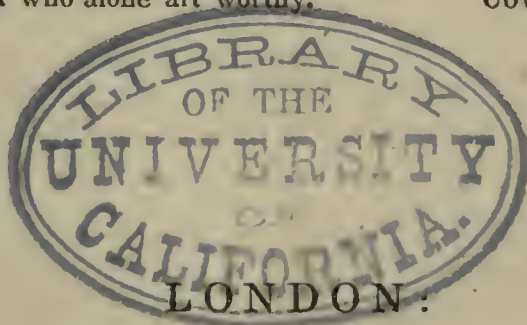


AN
HISTORICAL EXPOSITION
OF THE
PROPHECIES OF THE REVELATION
OF
ST. JOHN;
SHEWING
THEIR CONNECTION WITH AND CONFIRMATION OF
THOSE OF DANIEL,
AND OF THE OLD TESTAMENT IN GENERAL;
PARTICULARLY IN THEIR MOST IMPORTANT ASPECT
ON THE PRESENT TIMES.

BY MATTHEW HABERSHON.

“ The testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy.” Rev. xix. 10.

“ Come then, and added to thy many crowns,
Receive yet one, the crown of all the earth,
Thou who alone art worthy.” COWPER.



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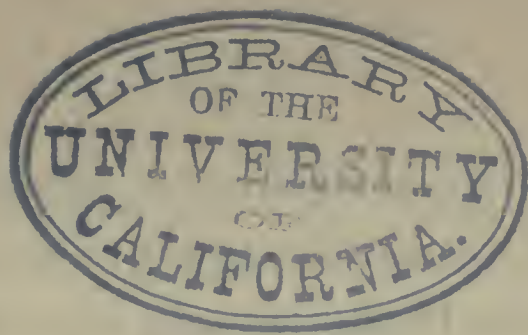
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THE author having found it impossible, from a want of time, to go through the whole of this undertaking so soon as he hoped and expected, is under the necessity of deferring the latter part to a future opportunity. Should God permit such to be enjoyed, he thinks another six months may enable him to complete it. In the mean time, he closes with the two series of events signified by the seven Seals, and the seven Trumpets ; and with the bearings of their respective terminations on each other, and on the corresponding prophecies of Daniel ; the whole affording most important disclosures of coming events.



P R E F A C E.

WITH regard to the importance of the study of Prophecy, it is not necessary in this place to add to what was said in the Preface to the Dissertation on the Prophecies of the Old Testament.

There appears little doubt but that events will soon transpire, which shall have the effect of imperiously and most solemnly turning the attention of all who have any respect for what God says, to more earnest inquiries on this subject, and to a deeper sense of its overwhelming and practical value. And how much better will it be, how much more reasonable it is, in our anticipations of the future, to bend the mind to this only true light "shining in a dark place," than, as we are all but too willing and ready to do, trust to our own fancies or wishes, and to say, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace." We are all of us naturally backward in believing that our own fond

schemes, with regard to worldly or family affairs, or even with regard to our expectations in reference to the church, are to be broken in upon and frustrated. Nevertheless we may be assured that such will be the case ; and that few of us are at all aware, as it respects these things, of the precipice on which we stand. Who in the antediluvian world believed Noah, when he announced the flood ? The inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah looked upon Lot as one that mocked : and none of the Jews, in the time of our Lord, believed Him when he announced the speedy destruction of their devoted city.

It is the same voice that now speaks ! And “ God is not a man that He should lie ; nor the son of man, that He should repent : hath He said, and shall He not do it ? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good ? ” Therefore it is well to attend to the admonition, “ Despise not prophesyings.” There can be no hesitation in saying, looking at the church in all its denominations, that they are yet, if not despised, neglected : so much so, that to many they are almost a prohibited subject.

In addition to the arguments which are

generally brought forward to prove that such conduct is both hurtful and anti-scriptural, there is one other consideration which appears to my mind most strongly to shew the special value of both the prophecies of Daniel and St. John in the sight of God, and, by consequence, the greater sin of those who neglect them. This is, that both these eminent prophets are declared to be the peculiar favourites of heaven; for of the former it is said, "O man, greatly beloved;" and of the latter, that he leaned on Jesus's breast, and received other marks of affectionate regard. The very circumstance therefore of such being chosen to have these great prophecies and revelations given to them, appears to be for the purpose of conferring the greatest of all honours upon them; and in that proportion to express their vast and unutterable importance; and in that proportion likewise to impress upon us, instead of neglecting them, how very greatly we ought to prize and study them.

Well therefore may it be said in reference to the Apocalypse, as a motto to the whole book, "Blessed is he that readeth, and they

that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things that are written therein; for the time is at hand."

*Bonner's Hall, near Hackney,
January 1841.*

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INTRODUCTION.

THE Revelation of St. John may be considered a treatise shewing the vital changes which have taken place, and which are to take place in the world, in connection with the church of Christ; revealing the hidden springs of the rise, continuance, and fall of nations; in a few words, it may be pronounced A PERFECT CHURCH HISTORY.

Before proceeding to its interpretation, it will serve to place the whole scope of the subject in a more striking light, very summarily to retrace the ground over which we have trodden in the Old Testament prophecies. In doing this I would point out—

FIRST. Those predictions of Daniel which were accomplished before the Christian era, and therefore do not relate to events in this prophecy.

These consist of all those which have any connection with the three successive ruling kingdoms of Babylon, Persia, and Greece, to the full establishment of the fourth or the Roman empire. Before this prophecy commences, likewise, the whole of

those Old Testament predictions relative to the Death of Christ, the consequent termination of the Jewish Dispensation, as well as those relating to the fall of Jerusalem, and the entire and complete dispersion of the Jews themselves, had all been fulfilled. Nothing, when this last great Revelation was given, was left unfulfilled but what belonged to the Christian Dispensation. To these—

SECONDLY, I would direct attention, as forming the nucleus of St. John's prophecies. Those of this description that have most particularly attracted our notice have been,

1. The destruction of the undivided Roman empire, represented by the cutting down of the Great Tree of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, which chiefly took place when it was attacked on all sides by the barbarous nations; and after which, it is said, it was bound together by a band of iron and brass, or by the Latin and Greek kingdoms.

2. The division of the Western or Latin branch of the Empire, or the Roman Empire proper, into the ten kingdoms predicted by the ten toes of the Great Image, and by the ten horns of the monstrous wild-beast.

3. The springing up of the little papal Horn, or the rise of the Papacy in the midst of these ten

kingdoms, described in the vision of the four wild beasts, and which was to last for a time, times, and an half.

4. The appearing of the Mahometan little horn out of or behind one of the four Grecian kingdoms into which Alexander's conquests were divided, described in the vision of the Ram and He-goat.

5. The great, universal, and overwhelming declension of religion, which the existence of these two apostacies indicated, and which is likewise noticed in the "Great Vision" of Daniel.

6. The reformation, spoken of in the same chapter as a "little help."

7. The appearance of the chief actor in the French Revolution, Napoleon Bonaparte, whose principles, policy, and success are so particularly described likewise in the same chapter.

8. The present signs of the Times, which are, the Mahometan little horn "breaking without hand;" the sudden and prodigious increase of travelling, or "many running to and fro;" and the unexampled "increase of knowledge."

These are the leading Old Testament prophecies, expanded more or less in the Revelation, which *have been* fulfilled, or are now fulfilling. Those which remain to be accomplished, and which the above Signs of the Times, in connection with the various

chronological Periods, proclaim to be so very near at hand, and which in fact are only those that now remain to be fulfilled on the roll of prophecy, are—

1. The persecution of the Church, and the remarkable wickedness of the wicked.

2. The complete extinction of the Mahometan power.

3. The destruction of the Papacy, or the end of the 1260 years.

4. The restoration of the Jews to their own land.

5. The conquests and career of the kings of the South and North, spoken of by Daniel to happen at the Time of the End.

6. The time of unprecedented trouble that is to be consequent upon that event.

7. The first Resurrection.

8. The reign of Christ on the Throne of David, and the establishment of his kingdom upon earth.

For the particular consideration of all these predictions, the reader is referred to “the Dissertation,” where they are each and separately enlarged upon. The more special use that we have now to make of them, is to explain the principles that may be deduced from them, for the interpretation of the greatly enlarged history of the Christian Dispensation, which is here

given; as an attention to such principles must assuredly tend to throw much light upon the subject, and be the means of preventing many mistakes.

In the first place, it will be perceived, from a careful consideration of the nature of events that have answered to the predictions, that they have on all occasions had a respect to profane history, or to the affairs of this world, only as they especially bore upon those of the Church, and as they were connected with the history of Redemption. Thus, for instance, no account whatever is taken of any of the great events of ancient history, but those which are connected with the destinies of the Jewish church and people. There is nothing in prophecy of the history of the Medes and Persians before the time of Cyrus, in whose reign they first came in contact with the affairs of the Jews by the conquest of Babylon;—nothing respecting the polished Grecian States of Athens, or Sparta, or Corinth, with numerous others, which make so distinguished a figure in classical literature before the time of Alexander the Great, when the interests of the Jews became involved in his conquests, and Greece became the ruling power of the world. And after Alexander's death, when his great empire was divided into four kingdoms, no account is taken but of those two to which the land

of Palestine was alternately subjected, called the kings of the North and South, or the kings of Syria and Egypt. In like manner, neither is there any account taken of the still more important wars, and the illustrious men concerned in them, connected with the long period of Roman history, fruitful as it is with incidents of such deep interest, especially in the Carthaginian war during the career of Hannibal, until it touches the affairs of the Jews in the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes; and even then, whilst any other of the successors of Alexander remained, but very slightly.

And in the more brief predictions, which in the Old Testament are given of the historical events connected with the Christian dispensation, the same principle is closely followed, and only such secular events are noticed as are intimately connected with the Church; and of course this principle is strictly adhered to in the more enlarged prophecies of the same events in the Apocalypse.

A second controlling principle, which should ever be kept in mind in the interpretation of prophecy deduced from the study of the Old Testament prophecies, and which is absolutely required for the purpose of enabling us to separate, with greater certainty and correctness, predicted subjects from the

extensive and boundless mass of history, is—that they have reference only to the most important eras of the world, and to the most remarkable and eminent events that have happened, and *not* to those of minor importance. Such, for instance, as were of the largest extent for time and space; that were most permanent in their effects; and which have been attended with the most surprising changes;—events, in fact, of a character sufficiently commanding to give rise to new orders of things, or to give new features to society; that have produced new habits of thought, and which involved innumerable millions in their weal or woe. It is, as the above enumeration fully evinces, events of such a character alone, that stand prominent on the roll of prophecy. And the very idea of such being the case, gives inexpressible grandeur to the study of the subject; for assuredly here there is nothing light, trifling, or common-place. This description of events, in fact, may be compared to those mountain tops that pierce into the clouds, inspiring feelings of awe and dread, and affording prospects as great and as magnificent as were beheld by Moses from the top of Pisgah; and like those, opening to our view the most lovely scenes; even those of a renovated world,—and scenes of which it may be truly said,

“No mockery meet us, no deception here.”

The next observation I would make is this—that under these controlling principles, we do right, in the interpretation of the prophetical parts of the Books of Daniel and St. John, to apply them to the affairs of secular history. In this particular I consider we have not only the sanction of the most valuable commentators, ancient and modern; but we have, as an unerring guide, the sanction of the Holy Spirit in the various divine interpretations of Daniel's prophecies. We have likewise the sanction of the historical books of the Old Testament, which differ from the former only in this, that while the one is anticipated history, this is fulfilled. In these books we find that the Church, before the Babylonish captivity, having an unavoidable connection with the course and revolution of human affairs, its concerns were necessarily interwoven with the changes and vicissitudes that have diversified the pages of profane history. This appears very distinctly in the Books of Kings, Chronicles, Nehemiah, Ezra, and Esther, where we find the history of the Church,—of its prophets and saints,—of the providence and grace of God in all the dispensations towards His people,—not only interwoven with secular Jewish history, but, as far as it comes in contact with their affairs, with Babylon, Persia, and other surrounding nations.

In a similar manner we shall find that the church, under the Christian dispensation, being in an equal degree identified with the affairs of the Roman empire from the time of Christ to the present moment, its history is, in an equal degree, intermixed with the successive actors, vicissitudes, and changes, which that empire has experienced; and which is shown to be the same by Daniel's symbol of a great wild beast with ten horns being brought forward to represent it. And it is in this way that history is made the hand-maid of divinity, the record of that providence which is the fulfilment of God's word. It is evident, therefore, that a complete Church history should, in this respect, imitate the model given in the inspired writings; and that, whilst it portrays the triumphs of divine grace in the hearts and lives of believers, showing how bright the Gospel hath shone in those who have cordially received its soul-reviving doctrines, it should, at the same time, exhibit the manner in which its visible external aspect has been influenced by the great men and the great movements of that world with which it has been connected. I consider, therefore, that we do right in giving the apocalypse an historical interpretation, and in looking upon it as a clear, compendious, and perfect church history.

Such a history it is, if we contemplate the events

which are predicted. There is nothing omitted that answers or agrees with the controlling principles above explained. All the great and leading movements that have influenced the affairs of the Church, and produced change, are, in the most beautiful and powerful order, introduced ; and that with inimitable simplicity. And this leads to another general observation, which is,—

To notice the peculiarity of the arrangement, which, it will be perceived, has much art and contrivance. It is not, as in histories of human composition, a mere consecutive narrative, confounding all descriptions of events in one common mass ; but, seizing the leading events of particular and distinct characters, it traces them to the end in separate and parallel lines. By this means the various and varying aspects of different periods of time, are, with particular clearness and simplicity, exhibited ; the origin, the qualities, and principles of nations, are accurately traced ; and the materials and facts of history are arranged so as to impress upon the memory their real cause, relative importance, correct bearing, and their infallible issue.

This peculiarity is adopted both in the prophecies of Daniel and St. John. In the first vision of the former, the outward aspect of the four successive

empires is exhibited as being that of a splendid idolatry, with the varying strength, quality, and grandeur of each. In the second vision, the principles and dispositions of the rulers and people of these kingdoms are accurately represented; with the notice of a remarkable ecclesiastical one, that should arise and be identified with the divided state of the last of the four, or with the ten kingdoms of the Roman empire. In the next vision of the Ram and He-Goat, the Persian and Greek empires alone come into view; and the fate of the latter, in the latter times, as distinct from the Roman empire, and as we at the present moment see it, is given in tracing the rise and exhibiting the conquests and principles of Mahometanism. The fourth and last vision appears to be a general summing up, in regular narrative, of the whole of the former three, as far as they bear upon, and have a more immediate connection with, the Jewish church; omitting, as hath been above noticed, the particular events relating to the Christian dispensation. Thus we see, that in the first vision a general but highly expressive outline is traced; then by another, and another, and another line of parallel events, the history of the whole period is filled up with the most surprising fulness and accuracy; and with so much clearness, that the great master-wheels, in whose tremendous evolutions

the unnumbered and complicated lesser wheels of Providence have been involved, are brought into the most distinct recognition.

This perfection of narration applies, in an equal degree, to the Apocalypse; perhaps, it may be said, from its predictions entering into such great minuteness, and embracing events of a more intricate character, in a superior degree. Here, first, we have, in one unbroken line, the great changes brought about in the *internal* administration of the empire, given under the expressive symbol of SEALS, and in number seven. Secondly, we have the changes brought about by the great and successful invasions of the empire *from without*, under the equally expressive symbol of TRUMPETS, likewise in numbers seven. Thirdly, we have the conjoint effect of these changes, as they have borne upon the interests of vital Christianity; in which the direct agency of both Christ and Satan is brought forward—Christ, in the first place, as driving Satan in the idolatry of Paganism, out of his rule in the visible dominion of the world, and making it a professedly Christian rule; and Satan, in revenge, being permitted to clothe himself with the garb of that Christian rule, and in it to depress the true church; and so far give his power and authority to the ten ruling sovereignties of the Roman empire, as through them to erect the papal ecclesiastical sovereign usurpation.

Such are the three principal lines of parallel prophecy in the Revelation. To the Seals belongs that portion extending from the fourth chapter to the 1st verse of the eighth chapter; to the second line, or the Trumpets, belongs that from the 2nd verse of the eighth chapter to the end of the eleventh chapter; and to the third, or general line, belongs, in reality, the remainder of the Book. They may be considered as three mighty parallel rivers, widening and branching out into numerous mouths, as they finish their course, and empty themselves into the sea. The first has such an extension in the contents of the seventh chapter; the second has several such in the contents of the tenth and greater part of the eleventh; and the third has many such—one of which is in the fourteenth chapter, the next in the seven vials of the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters, the next in the contents of the seventeenth, and so on to the end of the Book; forming, like the Nile, the Danube, or the Ganges, so many separate outlets to the one grand stream of prophetic history.

One great design—perhaps the chief design, of so great an enlargement at the end of each line of prophecy, is for the purpose of distinctly holding up to view the opposite fates of the true and the false church at the end of the dispensation; and in that separation, the exaltation of the righteous on the

one hand, and the dreadful judgment of the wicked on the other. At present, the tares and the wheat grow together; but, at the time of harvest, Christ will say, "Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my garner."* And thus it is here represented;—in the seals, those that have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, are marked for deliverance, *and delivered*; whilst the rest are left to the mercy of the blowing of the "four winds of heaven!"—in the trumpets, those who bear a life-giving testimony for God, are called up to heaven, and ascend thither in a cloud, whilst the rest are left to the mercy of the seventh trumpet. In the more internal and united series of events composing the third line, the deliverance to the righteous mentioned in the seals is again brought forward—it is also mentioned as the getting in of the harvest:† is pointed out in the sixth vial by the mention of the coming of Christ; and more fully described in the particulars given of the Millennial state in the last chapters. The fate of the merely professing church and ungodly world, is, on the contrary, fearfully exhibited in the description of the vintage, at the end of the fourteenth chapter; in the

* Matt. xiii. 30.

† Rev. xiv. 14—16.

contents of the seventh vial ; and in the eighteenth and nineteenth chapters. Thus will the Lord make it manifest, that after all the turmoils of life, and although He has permitted his people to be intermixed with the ungodly world, so as often scarcely to be known from them, yet, at the close, “that it shall be well with the righteous, for they shall eat the fruit of their doings,” but that “woe shall be to the wicked ! it shall be ill with him : for the reward of his hands shall be given him.”* So that we see the same principle of divine government runs through every part of the Word of God, and that it shines with uncommon brilliancy in these its more direct prophecies ; and hence, in a very special manner, we see their practical tendency.

The considerations which I have thus attempted to bring forward, to show the infinite superiority of the historical arrangement of the Apocalypse to every human composition, prove, that the wisdom therein displayed is the Wisdom of God ; and that it is becoming the Infinite Wisdom and Power that could plan and carry into effect the mighty series of events that are recorded. And this stamp of a Divine Mind will still more forcibly appear, if we

* Isaiah iii. 10, 11.

attentively consider the beauty and significancy of the symbolical language that is employed, both in these and other predictions scattered up and down the greater part of the Holy Scriptures. When properly viewed and understood, it is impossible to conceive anything more expressive, more lucid, more simple, or that could tell with equal effect; and I cannot but express my own conviction how much real intellectual gratification and pleasure they deprive themselves of, who neglect the study of these deeply interesting and glowing subjects, for the comparatively unprofitable and insipid inquiries on subjects that rise no higher than sense, and which are connected only with the passing things of time.

Symbols, when properly understood, are not used, as is often imagined, for the purpose of darkening the subject, and involving it in obscurity, but rather, by the intensity of their meaning and signification, of giving strength and clearness in a way that no play of common language could effect. They may be considered in many cases to have the effect of algebraical characters which stand for definite quantities, and which may be thrown into other quantities, multiplied and re-multiplied, yet still kept distinct and separate. "The figurative language of prophecy," observes Mr. Faber, "like the ancient hieroglyphics, and like those non-alphabetic characters

which are derived from them, is a language of ideas rather than of words. It speaks by pictures quite as much as by sounds; and through the medium of those pictures, rather than through the medium of a laboured verbal definition, it sets forth, with equal ease and precision, the nature and relation of the matters predicted.”* Hence, what volumes are contained in the four monarchies being given under the simple figure of a great idol! In this one grand idea is involved the whole system of the heathen mythology, and the no less idolatrous system of the saints and mediators of the Papacy; whilst the different metals of which the idol is said to be composed, express the relative strength and warlike character of each, in an equally simple and significant manner.

This remark will likewise apply to the symbols of the other visions of Daniel, as the explanations given of them in the former work evinces; whilst in the present work it will be equally manifest, that in still greater richness and variety they abound in every part of the Apocalypse. Here we find that the lengthened period of eighteen hundred years is, in the first place, given in two parallel series of events, under the two most significant master-symbols of SEALS

* Faber's Sacred Calendar, Vol. I. p. 10.

AND TRUMPETS; and then, in the union of the two, in more immediate connection with the true church which is described as “a woman clothed with the sun, the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars,” all this is most clearly expressed to belong to, and to describe the history of, the Roman empire, by the bringing forward of Daniel’s fourth monstrous nondescript wild beast, with the well-known adjunct of ten horns. And by the most simple contrivance, it is brought forward distinctly to mark its three-fold state of imperial rule, its present divided kingly rule, and revolutionary rule. The first, “as a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and *seven diadems upon HIS HEADS* :”* the second, as “a beast, having seven heads, and ten horns, and upon *HIS HORNS* ten diadems :† the third, as a scarlet coloured beast, full of the names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns,”‡ and *no crowns or diadems at all!* For the further illustration of these remarks on the symbols in this magnificent historical prophecy, the reader is referred to the work itself.

The Wisdom of God saw fit to make one remarkable distinction between the prophecies of Daniel,

* Rev. xii. 3.

† Ch. xiii. 1.

‡ Ch. xvii. 3.

and those of St. John, which may account for those of the former having been so much better understood than the latter, and for the less variety of opinion respecting them. It is this, that at the time of the delivery of the former an interpretation accompanied them. "We will tell," says Daniel, after relating the dream of the Great Image, "the interpretation thereof before the king," (Dan. ii. 36); and the interpretation was accordingly given. In the vision of the great wild beasts, likewise, he says, "I came near unto one of them that stood by, and asked him the truth of all this" (that is, an exact account of the whole matter). "So he told me, and made me to know the interpretation of the things." In like manner, in the vision of the Ram and He-goat, chap. viii. ver. 16, and onwards, the angel Gabriel very clearly made the Prophet understand the whole matter, by giving a very particular explanation, even to the naming of kingdoms. And his last great vision being descriptive, divested of metaphor, was so clear on the events transpiring, as to require no such divine explanation. But the case is very different with regard to the Apocalypse—very little of such kind of help occurs; and hence the greater difficulty that has been experienced, and the greater consequent variety of opinion in its interpretation; there being scarcely any other light to

guide us here, than either that which is reflected from the Book of Daniel on the one hand, or that which can be collected from the boundless mass of history on the other. It is true there is *one* direct interpretation in the Revelation—*one* instance where the finger of God directly points us to the right object; and it is a key which, properly used, opens the whole book, and sanctions and confirms the interpretation here offered. It is found in the 17th chapter and the last verse: “The woman which thou sawest is that great city that reigneth over the kings of the earth!”

There is only one original chronological period connected with the end of “the times of the Gentiles,” in the Apocalypse; and that is, the one giving the duration of the sixth trumpet. There is indeed the most invaluable light thrown upon the “time, times, and an half” of Daniel, by giving it in the two other different terms of “forty and two months,” and what is still clearer, of “one thousand two hundred and three score days,” without which it is a question whether either it, or other chronological prophecies to which it affords the key, could ever have been understood. So that although the symbolical history in the Revelation receives light from that of Daniel, yet the reverse is the case with regard to its

chronology. In this respect the dates given by Daniel are comparatively dark and uncertain without the reflected light derived from St. John ; and hence I conceive that our Saviour, speaking as man, would not have said, after these later prophecies were written, " Of that day and that hour knoweth no man ; no, not even the angels, nor the Son, but only the Father which is in heaven."

As a part of the revealed Word, I have felt myself, with other commentators, on safe and holy ground, in the endeavour to decipher this, the chronological part of prophecy. It is no where forbidden, but forms a component part of that which is distinctly and forcibly encouraged. I am far from wishing to attach an undue importance to it ; but I have thought it right and justifiable honestly to give that interpretation of it, which appears to me to accord with the analogy of Scripture and history ; and the issue I leave. At the same time, as I have before repeatedly observed, the force of events alone bring us to the same inevitable conclusions ; for reject dates and chronology altogether, still the events to which chronology points as next to happen, must happen, and, as every consideration bespeaks, soon happen : for they are the only ones that remain to be fulfilled ; and in the minutest narratives, such as the vials and others, they are described as running very close. I say

again, therefore, by rejecting the chronological prophecies we gain nothing. The sixth trumpet, as is evident to all, must soon cease; that is, the Ottoman empire must soon fall. The third woe, it is declared, will then come quickly. I say, therefore, if we reject dates, let us believe this; and believing this, there is but little in the whole of prophecy, both as detailed here and in the former work, that will not follow, and be likewise believed. What I have earnestly to request of the true members of the church of Christ is, of whatever name or denomination they belong, that they will attend to our Lord's own often repeated warning, and WATCH! If the views I have endeavoured to unfold be correct; then very soon must the Beast out of the bottomless pit, described in the eleventh of Revelation, appear. What latitude is to be given to the three prophetic days and an half, during which it is predicted it shall tyrannize over the church, I do not know. When our Lord said, that "as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth," (Matt. xii. 40) it appeared there was a latitude of expression to *a part of three days*. Three years and a half here, therefore, may possibly in like manner signify something above three years; however a little time will

explain. Meanwhile, most earnestly would I again repeat our Lord's warning, WATCH! The signs of the last times, in the events now crowding around us, are plain, unequivocal, and distinct. When, therefore, the principles of infidelity, which now appear to be embodied in the new name of Chartism, shall, as "the beast out of the bottomless pit," put themselves in successful hostility against the religion of Jesus Christ—and it confessedly now requires an armed force to keep them down—then let the church bestir herself, and prepare for the coming of her Lord. For whenever this happens, when "the wicked begin to do wickedly," as Daniel expresses it,* then all these things will quickly come to pass. Delay will be no longer. It will be as when, at the time of the Deluge, the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. I am anxious here to be understood; and for this purpose I beg to direct attention to the twelfth chapter of this work. I am anxious that on the breaking out of this power from the bottomless abyss, the church should then know where she is, *and not be involved in the RAPIDS with which she will be surrounded.* The time will then be arrived—and before this paper goes to the press it is possible

* See Diss. xiv. p. 379.

that time may arrive—when the cry will be made, “Behold the Bridegroom cometh!” *When* that time arrives, I again repeat it, the coming of the Bridegroom will be nigh at hand. When the church therefore sees these things, let such as be wise, and have oil, trim their lamps; for yet and a little while, and the door will be shut: yet a little while, and those that are thus ready shall hear a voice from heaven, saying unto them, “Come up hither,” and they shall ascend up to heaven in a cloud. Men may scoff at such things—and scoff they will—but God hath said the words, and they shall come to pass! How many will then say, “Lord, Lord, open unto us. But he shall answer and say, Verily, I say unto you, I know you not!”

We assuredly live in very solemn circumstances, and in circumstances from the weal or woe of which there is no escape; for the seventh angel will pour his vial “into the air;” that is, the contents of the vial will be UNIVERSAL in all its most disastrous consequences. Yet do we see that it is the duty and privilege of every child of God to contemplate and expect them with the same composed and happy frame of mind with which they are said to be contemplated and celebrated in heaven. For if these things are the theme of thankfulness, and praise, and glory, among the saints and happy spirits before the throne of God

and the Lamb—as we here see they are—they should be *no less* so the theme of animated devotion and holy joy to the Lord's people on earth! For surcharged and darkened as the atmosphere may at present be, it is theirs to look beyond it, to the righteous dealings of God therein—to their own everlasting safety in Christ their exalted head—to the dishonour done to his great name, being for ever effaced—to their own triumphant rescue—and to the new and glorious dispensation which will ere long arise on the world. We may well, therefore, all join with the Apostle in saying, “Come, Lord Jesus, O come quickly;” and with our own poet, when he says,

“Haste then, and wheel away a shattered world,
Ye slow revolving seasons! we would see
(A sight to which our eyes are strangers yet)
A world that does not dread and hate his laws,
And suffer for its crime; we would learn how fair
The creature is that God pronounces good:
How pleasant in itself what pleases Him.”

COWPER.

CORRIGENDA.

- Page 26, l. 22, *for* Trinity *read* Spirit.
38, l. 19, — Vitringer — Vitringa.
42, l. 9, — is — are.
43, l. 8, — vial — veil.
62, l. 17, read *of* most dread command.
82, l. 15, *for* testify *read* testifies.
89, l. 8, — awful — fearful.
112, l. 6, — believer — Christian.
136, l. 4, — eruption — irruption.
178, l. 30, read *the death of* Sultan.

CHAPTER I.

CHRIST THE HEAD AND DIRECTOR

OF THE

CHURCH'S AFFAIRS;

WITH A

DESCRIPTION OF ITS STATE AT THE TIME THIS
BOOK WAS WRITTEN.

The title of the Book of Revelation—Its dedication to the Seven Churches—The circumstances of John when it was written—Given on the Lord's day—The command given—Description of the appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ—The encouragement he gave—The subject matter of this Book, the mystery of God—Addresses to the Seven Churches of general application—Address to the church in Ephesus—in Smyrna—in Pergamos—in Thyatira—in Sardis—in Philadelphia—in Laodicea—The history in the Revelation a carrying out of these principles—The Divinity of Christ and the Holy Ghost—The unity of the Church—Millennial Intimations.



THE
REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST;

WHICH GOD GAVE UNTO HIM,
TO SHEW UNTO HIS SERVANTS THINGS WHICH MUST
SHORTLY COME TO PASS;

AND HE SENT AND SIGNIFIED THE SAME BY HIS ANGEL,
UNTO HIS SERVANT

JOHN,

WHO BARE RECORD OF THE WORD OF GOD,
AND THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS CHRIST, ACCORDING
TO ALL THINGS THAT HE SAW.

“Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of
this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein,
for the time is at hand.”

(Rev. i. 1—3.)





JOHN

TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES WHICH ARE IN ASIA.

“ GRACE be unto you, and peace, from HIM WHICH IS, and WHICH WAS, and WHICH IS TO COME ;

“ And from the SEVEN SPIRITS which are before his throne ;

“ And from JESUS CHRIST, who is the faithful witness, and the first-begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth.

“ Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father ; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

“ I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.”

The circumstances under which this Revelation was given to John.

“ I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

The day on which it was given.

“ I was in the Spirit on the LORD’S DAY.”

The command that was given.

“ And I heard behind me a great voice as of a trumpet, saying,

“ I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last ; and, What

thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia ;

Unto Ephesus, and
 Unto Smyrna, and
 Unto Pergamos, and
 Unto Thyatira, and
 Unto Sardis, and
 Unto Philadelphia, and
 Unto Laodicea."

The appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ with the symbols of his power.

" And I turned to see the voice that spake with me.

" And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks ; and in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto THE SON OF MAN,

" Clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.

" His head and his hairs were white, like wool, as white as snow ;

" And his eyes were as a flame of fire ;

" And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace ;

" And his voice as the sound of many waters.

" And he had in his right hand seven stars ; and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword : and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength."

The effect of this vision on the mind of the Apostle.

" And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead."

What the Lord Jesus Christ said.

" And he laid his right hand, saying unto me, Fear not, I am the first and the last : I am he that liveth, and was dead ; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen ; and have the keys of hell and of death.

" Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which SHALL BE HEREAFTER ;"—

Which things are—that is, the things which John had seen, which he did then see, and which should happen onwards to the end of time—these things are,

“The mystery of the seven stars which,” saith Christ, “thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches : and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest, are the seven churches.”

So that the whole contents of this book consist of the mysterious providences that were to happen in connexion with the church of Christ, both as it respected pastors and people ; the number *seven*, here so generally used, implying completeness and perfection. Just as if it had been expressly said, “What is to happen ‘hereafter’ is the mystery concerning the church of Christ—that church which he bought with his own blood—those who proclaim which, he holds in his right hand, and in the midst of which, wherever two or three are gathered together in his name, there he is—and thus he walks amongst the candlesticks or lamp-bearers.”

So that, commencing this most important revelation by describing the things “which *are*,” appears to be done for the purpose of holding up a glass or mirror for the church to view itself to the end of time. In the seven addresses, therefore, which follow, are described the various states in which at one time or other, in one place or other, the church has ever appeared from that time to this. And in studying them, we ought not merely to generalize them ; but, as component parts of that body of which they speak, of which body Christ is the head,

we ought individually to bring them home to our own bosoms, and to consider them as addressed personally to us : and our own consciences will tell us where they apply. The first address is

TO THE CHURCH IN EPHESUS.

(ch. ii. v. 1—7.)

“ Unto the angel of the church in Ephesus write ; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks ;

“ I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil : and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars : and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name’s sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.

“ Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

“ Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen ; and repent, and do the first works ; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

“ But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate.

“ He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches ;

“ To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.”

The second address is

TO THE CHURCH IN SMYRNA.

(ch. ii. v. 8—11.)

“ And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write ; These things saith the First and the Last, which was dead, and is alive ;

“ I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou

art rich,) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, but are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.

“Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer : behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried : and ye shall have tribulation ten days : be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches ;

“He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.”

The third address is

TO THE CHURCH IN PERGAMOS.

(ch. ii. 12—17.)

“And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write ; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges ;

“I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan’s seat is : and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.

“But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate.

“Repent ; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches ;

“To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.”

The fourth address is

TO THE CHURCH IN THYATIRA.

(ch. ii. v. 18—29.)

“ And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write ; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass ;

“ I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works ; and the last to be more than the first.

“ Notwithstanding, I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.

“ And I gave her space to repent of her fornication ; and she repented not.

“ Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.

“ And I will kill her children with death ; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts ; and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.

“ But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak ; I will put upon you none other burden.

“ But that which ye have already, hold fast till I come.

“ And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations : (And he shall rule them with a rod of iron ; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers :) even as I received of my Father. And I will give him the morning star.

“ He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”

The fifth address is

TO THE CHURCH IN SARDIS.

(ch. iii. v. 1—6.)

“ And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write ; These

things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars ;

“ I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.

“ Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die : for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard ; and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments ; and they shall walk with me in white : for they are worthy.

“ He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment ; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

“ He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”

The sixth address is

TO THE CHURCH IN PHILADELPHIA.

(ch. iii. v. 7—13.)

“ And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write ; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth ; and shutteth, and no man openeth ;

“ I know thy works : behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it : for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.

“ Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie ; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.

“ Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee, from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly : hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

“ Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of

my God ; and he shall go no more out : and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God : and I will write upon him my new name.

“ He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”

The seventh and last address is

TO THE CHURCH IN LAODICEA.

(ch. iii. v. 14—22.)

“ And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write ; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God :

“ I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot : I would thou wert cold or hot.

“ So then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

“ Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing ; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked :

“ I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich ; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear ; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see.

“ As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten : be zealous therefore, and repent.

“ Behold, I stand at the door and knock : if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

“ To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne.

“ He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”

These addresses have suggested to my own mind the following considerations :

1st. That the whole remaining part of the Book of Revelation, and in that the history of the church for the last eighteen hundred years, is but the carrying out and development of the principles here so strikingly exhibited ; and that in what remains to be accomplished, they will be exhibited in their highest perfection, both of justice and of mercy ; both in their rewards and punishments ! Hence we see that the same watchful and scrutinizing eye which is here shewn to take such particular knowledge of the internal state of the church, and of the least departure it makes, either in doctrine or practice, from the truth, still watches, and has ever watched, over it with the same sleepless care and the same jealous interest. Yes, it watches over it *now*. And there are no enemies against which we are here warned ; no conflicts against which we are strengthened ; no encouragements which are given ; no rewards promised ; no consolations afforded ; but what we may all take to ourselves, and ought to take to ourselves—each and individually.

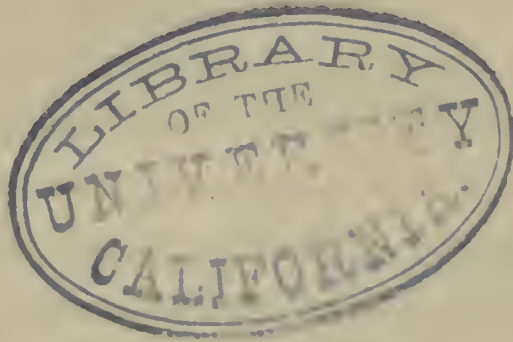
2nd. The most demonstrable arguments are afforded for the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the divinity of the Holy Ghost ; and that although they are two persons, they are one with God. To this effect we see, that in the preface to each of the addresses, Christ assumes the attri-

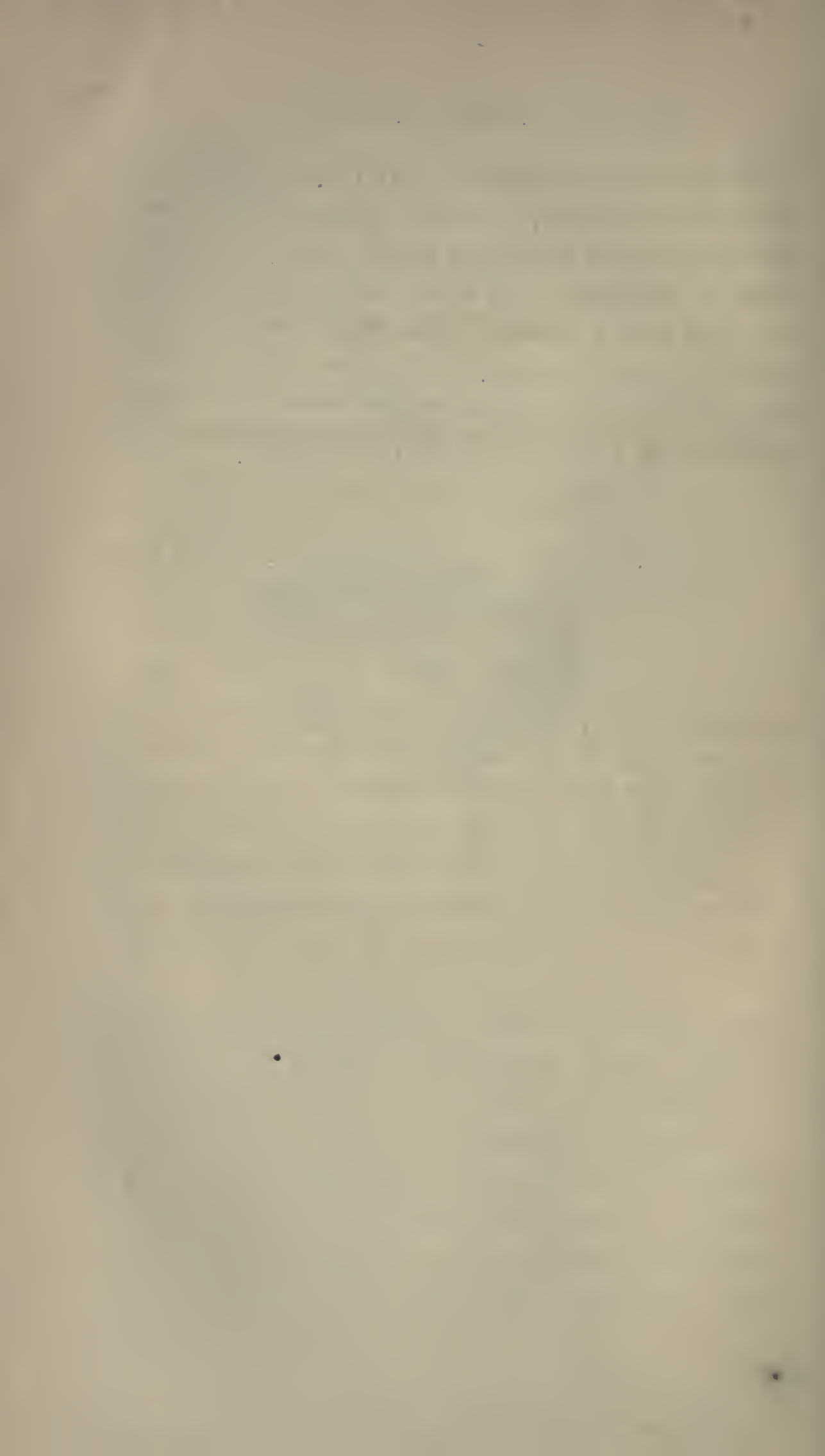
butes and prerogatives of Deity, at the same time identifying himself as the Saviour who died and rose again ; and concluding each with the solemn, most solemn exhortation, to attend to what THE SPIRIT saith unto the churches.

3d. They most forcibly direct our attention to the essentials of gospel truth, waiving all those unimportant distinctions of particular churches in our day which man has made, and which have been and still are, the cause of so many dissensions. The church, as described here, consists of all those, be their minor distinctions what they may, and of only those “ who have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” Of all those, and those only, who can take up the language of John, and say, “ Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and the Father, to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”

4th. We have, in these addresses most distinctly implied, the glorious expectations of the Church with regard, 1st, to the nations being broken to pieces ; 2nd, to the second coming of the Saviour ; 3rd, to the reign of the saints ; 4th, to the coming down of the New Jerusalem from heaven ; and 5th, to Christ taking possession of a throne distinct from that on which he now reigns with the Father, (ch. iii. 21).

The Apostle was told (ch. i. v. 19) to write those things which he saw, even the things which were then present, and the things which were to be after these, or hereafter. We have touched upon the former, and now proceed to turn our attention to the latter—to those things which are, as being future, to happen “hereafter;” and which alone are, strictly speaking, of a more decidedly prophetic character.





CHAPTER II.

REPRESENTATION OF THE DIVINE
GLORY IN HEAVEN,
AND
ITS BLESSED INHABITANTS.

The second division of the Revelation here commences with the things to be "hereafter"—The symbol of their being unfolded—Scene described to be in Heaven—The Throne of God—The Elders—The Seven Spirits—The living creatures—The Worship of Heaven—The whole taken from Jewish worship—Similar visions of Isaiah—Ezekiel—The Symbols of the Throne—What the Elders represent—The Lightnings and Thunders—The seven lamps of fire—The sea of glass—The four living creatures considered and explained—The language of their songs of praise.

CHAPTER II.

REPRESENTATION OF THE DIVINE GLORY IN HEAVEN.

(ch. iv.)

“After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven; and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter.”

This begins the second division of the Book, the disclosure of events which were then to come; and accordingly a new vision is introduced. In the former, the Apostle was not bidden to ascend into heaven, because no part of the scene to be transacted was there: the subject of what was then to be made known, concerned the church then in existence, and was not involved in the intricacies of human affairs.

Accordingly Christ is there exhibited as walking in the midst of the churches, and, both by warnings, threatenings, rewards, promises, and encouragements, guarding its purity. But now that the history of the Church to all future generations commences; and God is pleased, in giving it, to give it the superior advantage above all human histories, of showing to

us its connexion and sympathy with the church above, and the hierarchy of heaven; the apostle is ordered (and ordered by the Lord Jesus Christ, “ the first voice which he heard”) to ascend up thither.

In the highly figurative and expressive language in which the whole of this history is given, a door is said to be opened in heaven. This conveys the idea of all hindrances being removed, and an important welcome given—and it signifies in this place that such a welcome is given to all the disclosures which are about to be made of the counsels, decrees, and glories of Heaven.

Faint and cold at the best are the highest ideas we can, while in this world, form of that happy region, of which it is declared, that it consists of “ a fulness of joy, and pleasures at God’s right hand for evermore.” We must, as the Apostle was, be taken up thither, before we shall be able to realize in any adequate degree its superlative blessedness; for no description however vivid, no representation however glowing, can bring home its glories to our carnal minds—none at least, even when given by the pen of inspiration, without much of the sanctifying illumination of that Spirit by which they were indited. May such illumination be given whilst we consider the effulgent opening of heaven here presented to our view; and may we be enabled, at least as far as the Lord permits and intends by this disclosure, in some faint degree to

“ Pierce within the veil
Which hides that world of light.”

The description here given is in the following language :

1. THE THRONE.

“ And immediately I was in the Spirit : and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine-stone : and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.

2. THE ELDERS.

“ And round [about the throne were four and twenty seats : and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment ; and they had on their heads crowns of gold. And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices :

3. THE SEVEN SPIRITS.

“ And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

4. THE LIVING CREATURES, AND THEIR WORSHIP.

“ And before the throne there was a sea of glass, like unto crystal : and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four living creatures, full of eyes before and behind. And the first living creature was like a lion, and the second living creature was like a calf, and the third living creature had the face as a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle. And the four living creatures had each of them six wings about him ; and they were full of eyes within : and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.

THE WORSHIP OF THE ELDERS.

“ And when these living creatures give glory, and honour, and thanks to Him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and

ever, the four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship Him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."

It will better assist us to understand this representation, as well as the scenery of the whole book, if, in studying it, we bear in mind that the Almighty, in the particulars here given, honours his own word, his own ordinances, and his own institutions, as connected with the Jewish dispensation and the Old Testament worship, by bringing them forward as the basis of the greater revelations and discoveries now about to be made. Being addressed to the visible sight, they supplied proper and suitable materials for the platform of these splendid visions; while the description of heaven and the heavenly world, above given, appears only as exhibiting or carrying out the anti-type of the divinely-ordered Jewish encampment in the wilderness. And, indeed, it may be observed, that in like manner as it is the ordinary way of the prophets to touch upon Jewish matters and history, and refer them for their full significance to the prophecies and histories of the Christian Church; so does the book of Revelation, in a pre-eminent manner, take the style of the old prophets, their symbols, types, and institutions, and bring them forward for the illustration of the wonderful and splendid history here given.

To begin with the description given in the above

quotation of the heavenly world, we cannot but be struck with its similarity to the encampment of the children of Israel in their forty years' journeyings, described in Numbers ii.—and with the evident light which the comparison throws upon that representation. For instance, in the very centre of the camp there was that visible token or manifestation of God's immediate presence or glory, and the only one on earth, the Shechinah. This consisted of a cloud, sometimes breaking out into a bright and refulgent flame, resting on the mercy-seat; answering to its brighter anti-type now exhibited within the opened door of heaven to the view of the apostle, consisting not of a cloud and flame, but of a splendid throne. It was that throne seen by Micaiah,* when he said: "I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the hosts of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left." Also that described by Isaiah in the following sublime language, "I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the Seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory."

Besides this mention, there is to be found in the 1st of Ezekiel a most magnificent description of this resplendent seat of the Divine Majesty, corresponding

* 1 Kings xxii. 19.

in a most remarkable manner, yet in beautifully diversified language, with that here given. After many particulars from the 4th to the 26th verse, it closes as follows,—and I transcribe it, as I wish to draw a fixed attention to what is so often, in the after-parts of the Revelation, brought forward: “And above the firmament there was, over their heads, the likeness of a THRONE, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it. And I saw, as the colour of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upwards, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about. As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord.”

In the representation before us, no attempt is made to describe the majesty of Him that sat upon the throne—it is merely said that He was to look upon like a jasper, or a sardine stone—that is, of the dazzling splendour and the ineffable brightness of the most costly, pellucid, transparent stones; and in this nameless majesty there is something inexpressibly grand. It is something resembling that which it is said was seen by Moses and Aaron when they went up into the mountain.*

* See Exodus xxiv. 10, 17.

It is a striking and encouraging appendage, both as mentioned here and in the above description of Ezekiel, that round the throne was a pledge of mercy : “ There was a rainbow round about the throne,” of the colour of living green, “ in sight like unto an emerald,” or “ a brightness round about as the appearance of the bow in the day of rain.”

There were likewise round about this ineffably glorious throne of Jehovah four-and-twenty seats, or, more properly speaking, four-and-twenty other thrones, upon which are represented, seated, four-and-twenty elders with white robes, the emblems of perfect purity, and with coronets of gold on their heads.

These elders appear to be that part of the church redeemed from among men, who have *already received their reward*, and they answer to the four-and-twenty courses of the priests appointed by David to minister among the Jewish people set apart for the service of the temple ; and likewise to the camp of the Levites, which in the wilderness surrounded the Tabernacle. For it appears very evident that there is a part of the ransomed church who have thus received their reward. The very circumstance of their being described in a bodily form, and seen with honours bestowed upon them, shews that they are intended to represent something more than separate spirits.

The question therefore arises, is there anything in Scripture to countenance such an idea, that any part of the righteous are now in the presence of God in such a state ? In the first place, I would notice,

that, as in the case of Enoch and Elijah, at least some must be in heaven in their bodily forms. In the second, that, on the great occasion of the death of our Lord, “the graves were opened, and many of the bodies of the saints,” which slept, arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.”*

In the third place, in the description of the city of the living God given by Paul in the Hebrews, a distinction is made between the “general assembly and the church of the first born which are written in heaven,” and the “spirits of just men MADE PERFECT;” and these latter, I consider, are those who rose at the crucifixion, and are what I conceive are represented “by the elders.” Their numbers we can have no idea of; but most probably they consist of those who had been most eminently useful and faithful in their day and generation, and had borne the heat and burden of the day. And this interpretation of the meaning of the elders, appears to my mind the more probable, from the circumstance of their not being introduced either in the visions of Isaiah or Ezekiel; nor is there anything at all resembling them, or that can answer to them. And the reason is obvious: there were then no spirits of just men made perfect in heaven—the resurrection at the time of the Saviour’s crucifixion not

* Matt. xxvii. 52, 53.

having taken place ; and there having been no previous resurrection, there was no part of the saved church for the four and twenty elders, therefore, to represent. But after that great event, the case was different ; many of the spirits of the just were “ made perfect,” that is, their bodies and souls were united, and therefore formed a separate and distinct class of heavenly inhabitants.

The lightnings, and thunderings, and voices, which proceeded out of the throne, bring us to the transactions of Sinai, and to the transcript of the mind and will of God, as there made known in the promulgation of the moral law ; and appear to say, that whilst there is a bow of mercy around the throne, in virtue of the covenant of grace, there is at the same time vengeance and wrath to the wicked, and to every transgressor of that law.

The seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, said to be the seven spirits of God, and which are referred to in ch. i. v. 4, evidently appear to represent the Holy Trinity, and answer to the golden candlestick with seven branches, which was before the most holy place.

The sea of glass before the throne, clear and transparent as crystal, is in allusion to the molten sea of brass used for the purification of the priests ; and appears to signify, that, in opposition to a thick and troubled sea, “ whose waters cast up mire and dirt,” heaven is a place of settled peace. Perhaps the idea

is correctly conveyed in the following beautiful lines of Watts :—

“ There shall I bathe my weary soul
In seas of heavenly rest ;
And not a wave of trouble roll
Across my peaceful breast.”

Beyond all these in the Jewish encampment, and enclosing the tabernacle, consisting of the glory of God, the priests, the candlestick, and the molten sea, was the *whole body of the people*, the twelve tribes, disposed under four large battalions or armies, and each under one general standard of the four principal tribes, forming a square. The standard of Judah was on the east side ; that of Ephraim on the west ; Reuben on the south ; and that of Dan on the north : and each of these standards had a tribe on the right and the left ; thus completing the twelve tribes, and taking in the whole number of the people, the whole of the visible church.

We might expect, therefore, to find the analogy in the description of the heavenly world continued, and this whole body of the people represented in heaven. Accordingly, what St. Paul styles “ the general assembly and church of the first-born,”—those not yet “ *made perfect*,” as distinct from the elders, or those who are made perfect, that is, the redeemed myriads of yet disembodied spirits—are represented as “ four living creatures full of eyes before and behind, in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne.”

It is very evident that the description given in Isaiah and in Ezekiel, and the one in this place, are all “derived from the same original; and that whatever may seem to be the difference between the Seraphim of Isaiah, and the Cherubim of Ezekiel, it is here reconciled by their being brought into comparison with a third common measure, namely, the ‘living creatures’ of St. John’s vision.”

The original term is very improperly, in our Bible, translated “beasts.” A beast is inferior, and throughout the whole of the prophetic scriptures represents masses of human beings acting below the dignity of their nature; whereas these living creatures are far superior in intelligence to man, and perfectly holy. The difficulty must be great, of representing under a simile, to our conceptions, the spirits of the just in heaven, in their disembodied state; and Ezekiel intimates this difficulty of expressing it by similitudes taken from earthly things, by saying, “*as it were* the likeness of four living creatures.”

In both prophets we see the resemblance to the same animals; but in Ezekiel each “living creature” appears to have the four likenesses *in itself*, and together therewith a general resemblance to the human form—that is, that dignified appearance which distinguishes man from other animals, resulting from his superior intelligence. It is here said, that they were respectively like a lion, an ox, the face of a man, and a flying eagle, each chief of its class, signifying the strength, power, and vigour;

the usefulness, industry, and labour ; the reason and quick-sightedness, with which they serve, obey, and worship God.

From both visions, it appears that no part of these beings was without that wonderful part of animal creation, eyes—the inlets of knowledge and intelligence, expressible of the infinite superiority of their understanding to anything known or experienced in this world, and perfectly agreeing with other parts of Scripture which represent the perfection of knowledge in heaven.

Their position, likewise, before the throne, is agreeable to what is related of that of the righteous dead: “absent from the body, *present with the Lord.*” They are here described as “in the midst of the throne and round about the throne,” as if their situation could not be exactly fixed. Ezekiel likewise says, “in the midst ;” but at the same time expresses the uncertainty of their position by these words, “They ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning ;” both, however, expressly implying, that it is as near the throne of God as it can be ! What they mean, however, in one vision, they mean in the other, and represent in a lively manner the high honour, the blaze of intelligence, the superlatively exalted qualities, the unbounded range, and the delightful employment of every individually saved sinner ; thus forming the “general assembly of the church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven,” and who never-ceasingly cry

“ Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, which is, and which is to come.”

The rest of the chapter cannot be better told than by repeating the language of the inspired writer. “ And when the living creatures”—or the “ general assembly of the church of the first born”—thus “ give glory, and honour, and thanks ”—to the Lord God Almighty ; “ to Him that sitteth on the throne, and liveth for ever and ever ; ”—while they are thus employed, “ the four and twenty elders, the spirits of just men MADE PERFECT,” fall down before Him that sitteth on the throne, and worship Him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, “ Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive the glory, and the honour, and the power ; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”

I would here only make one further observation, and that is, that the above interpretation, with regard to the elders and four living creatures, constituting the redeemed church in heaven, appears confirmed by the language they use in the song of praise given in the succeeding chapter, and which it seems impossible they could otherwise employ. In ch. v. ver. 8, it is said “ that the four living creatures, and the four and twenty elders, fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sung a new song,”—not merely praising God for his perfections and for creation, as

in the above description, but they praise him for redemption, and for redeeming *them* — “ And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the Book, and to loose the seals thereof : for thou wast slain, and *hast redeemed us to God by thy blood*, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation ; and hast made us unto our God, kings, and priests : and *we shall reign on the earth.*”

CHAPTER III.

THE
EXALTATION OF CHRIST IN HEAVEN;
THE COMMITTAL OF THE
CHURCH'S CONCERNS INTO HIS HANDS;
AND THE
WORSHIP PAID TO HIM BY ITS BLESSED
INHABITANTS.

Symbol of the Book—A master symbol—Its seven seals—Their general meaning—Form of the books of the ancients—Importance of the contents of the seven-sealed book—Coming forward of Christ as the slain Lamb—In what sense he opens the seals—Extent of time they represent—The study of them important—Worship of the living creatures—The prayers of the Saints—New Song of heaven—Future honour of the Saints—Song of the Angels—And of the whole Creation—Divinity of Christ.

CHAPTER III.

THE

EXALTATION OF CHRIST ;

AND

THE WORSHIP PAID TO HIM.

THE Apostle having represented the throne and majesty of the Lord God Almighty to our view ; and having described that that throne was encircled by the redeemed church, consisting both of the bodied and disembodied spirits of just men, he goes on to say,—

“ I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals.” (v. 1.)

The mention of a book in the right hand of God, seated on his throne in heaven, implies that such a symbol must be understood as intended to convey to our minds a register, wherein things are written of God’s counsels and purposes, respecting what was to “ happen hereafter.” At the same time it is very evident, from the subsequent predictions in the Revelation, that, as a symbol, it is highly significant ; not referring to an indiscriminate relation of events, or to a literal book ; but having relation to a certain class of

events—and, from the position in which it stands, and the circumstances that surround it, to the *most superior* class or series of events, and those of a character to which this symbol has a reference. It contains, in fact, the ground work of Church history under the Christian dispensation ; and stands exactly in the same relation to the fourth or Roman kingdom *individually*, as the vision of the great image of Daniel* did to the four kingdoms *collectively* ; that is, it contains the first great lesson of modern history, and that in which all the events of the last eighteen hundred years are involved.

I consider, therefore, that, in like manner as the vision of the great image laid the platform, or the grand outline of Gentile idolatrous history in the four successive kingdoms of Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome ; so does the writing of this book give the great outline of the entire remaining history of the remaining part of the last or fourth kingdom, beginning from the time in which these splendid visions were given to John, in the reign of the emperor Trajan, near the end of the first century. What we have to do, therefore, is to refer to *the Astronomical Canon of Ptolemy*, given at the end of “ the Dissertation of the Prophecies of the Old Testament ;” *and its continuation*, and we shall there see the names of all the successive emperors from that time to the present. It is the history of their reigns, therefore, with all the mighty events and changes that have revolved

* See p. 176, Dis.

with them, as what was to “happen hereafter,” and what was promised to be revealed to the Apostle, that we may naturally suppose was intended to be represented by the contents of this book.

By the seven seals with which it is said to be sealed, are to be understood the distinct and most important eras or portions of time in which, during this long period, these successive reigns were divided or distinctly marked, forming new orders of things. Their being all homogeneous, or similar in their nature, renders it necessary that the government should continue the same, and not signify, like the changes of the great image, changes of monarchy. And this idea clearly explains to my mind, that this master-symbol, of a book sealed with seven seals, signifies that the general historical record of the Roman empire, running through the entire number of its numerous successive emperors, was to experience seven most decided and complete changes, each of which should give new habits of thought, alter the complexion of affairs, and form new and distinct eras of time. And it will appear, as we proceed, that six out of the seven of such successive changes, have already passed; and that the reigns thus prominently standing forward, are most aptly and significantly designated as being brought out by events and instruments *within* the empire itself; by the opening of seals—that is, events having the stamp of legitimate authority—the seals of empire; and not, like the next series of events, by extrinsic causes, *without* the bounds of the empire.

They are generally supposed to signify secrecy ; but this is considering them to have a literal, not a symbolical signification ; and it is indispensably necessary to a right interpretation of the whole of this book, to keep this in mind, and not to sink the professed symbols. Besides which, this supposition takes away all the point of this otherwise striking symbol ; for there is in reality as much secrecy in the sounding of the trumpets, and the pouring out of the vials, as there is in the opening of the seals. If this, indeed, be the meaning they have, it may be said of all the different classes of events, that one is sealed as much as the other, and the name would be as appropriate to the one as the other. The more dignified and just interpretation therefore appears to me, to consider the opening of the respective seals as the unfolding of new orders of things, having the confirmation of what we understand by the Great Seal of the empire. Considered as such, they are inexpressibly majestic and sublime in the events to which they refer, and in the most affecting and touching manner pourtray the varied hue and complexion which the state of society has so sadly exhibited during this long period. Thus considered, they have likewise an importance attached to them, corresponding to that which it might naturally be supposed must be the case, from the book being said to be seen in the right hand of the Most High, from no one being found worthy to open the seals thereof but the Saviour himself, as well as from the overwhelming solemnity of the whole scene.

With regard to the peculiar form of this book, those of the ancients are said to have been generally skins of parchment, rolled up and sealed on the back side. In this case, therefore, of the book having seven seals, it is considered, and most probably correctly, that seven successive volumes were thus rolled over each other, and each of them sealed; and that it is these “seals” which were seen by the Apostle to be successively opened—symbolizing the seven greatest revolving wheels of providence, that have carried in their tremendous whirl “the fates and fortunes of the church of Christ,” in its connection with the last of the four great empires of Daniel, from that time to the whole remaining period of its existence on earth.

This last consideration—viz., that the seven-sealed book contained the great outlines of the history of the Christian Church, distinguishing, according to the learned Vitringer, the seven greater events or important changes which were to befall it, even to the end of the Christian dispensation—enables us more clearly to understand the why and wherefore of what follows; and more clearly to appreciate the beautiful, and to us most deeply interesting, adaptation of character and circumstances to the design of the whole vision.

“And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? And no man in heaven, nor in earth, nor under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. And I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open the book, neither to look

thereon. And one of the elders said unto me, Weep not : behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof." (v. 2—5.)

Here I would draw attention to the circumstance, that it is one of the elders, one of the risen saints, of the spirits of just men made perfect, that is thus made to afford this consolation. I would observe, likewise, before proceeding, that there can be no mistake as to who is intended by "the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David," as it can only refer to CHRIST, who was of the tribe of Judah ; and likewise, *as God*, who was the root, although he was likewise, *as man*, the offspring of David. Therefore, in reading of Him in the next verse, in the character of a slain Lamb—that is, that it is in the character of our great atoning sacrifice, that he takes the book, and opens the seven seals thereof—we understand, that whilst, as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, he is king—whilst, as the root of David, he is a divine person—yet it is in the character that most endears him to us, that he was worthy, and that he prevailed, not merely to disclose, but *to foresee and govern, the course of this prophecy into events*. For this it must be that is signified by no one but Christ being found worthy to take the book and to open the seals ; that is, as doing something which could not be deputed either to angels or to men. In almost every other instance, as far as the mere revealing of God's decrees is concerned, it has been committed to his servants the prophets ; and even it may be observed, that such is really the case here, for, unquestionably, the whole contents of

the Revelation, "he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John." By Christ therefore opening the seals, we ought assuredly to understand, not that he disclosed to view what they contain, but that He brings to pass the events which they represent. To this effect Watts speaks in the following lines :

"Eternal Father, who shall look
Into thy secret will?
Who but the Son shall take that book,
And open every seal?

HE SHALL FULFIL THY GREAT DECREES,
The Son deserves it well;
Lo, in his hand the sovereign keys
Of heaven, and death, and hell!"

All this is thus expressed by the Apostle :

"And I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne, and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb, as it had been slain, having seven horns, and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth. And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne. And when he had taken the book, the four living creatures, and the four and twenty elders, fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of the saints.

"And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation : and hast made us unto our God kings and priests : and we shall reign on the earth." (v. 6—10.)

In all this there must be an express and intense significancy : that God the Father should deliver up to Christ the immediate agency of the events

decreed in the writings of this book ; and that too in the character of the slain Lamb—of our atoning sacrifice ; and that He should thus deliver *only* the events of this “ book,” proves, in the first place, that it contains events that must concern his church *as long as that church exists on earth*, and not merely extend, as they are generally considered, only over the three first centuries ; for it cannot be supposed, that what He thus held in his right hand, and what was thus solemnly delivered to Christ, could only concern a sixth portion of the period of the Christian era—a portion, in the course of which no change marking a prophetic period was apparent. In the second place, this shows the deep concern which God has in all the concerns of His church ; and it affords the deepest condemnation to the infidelity of the present age on the one hand, and to the indifference of His professing people on the other.

In the commission first given to the Apostle, he was ordered to write the things which he saw, even the things which were present ; and likewise THE THINGS WHICH WERE TO BE HEREAFTER.* After the things present were disposed of, the same voice, “ the first voice which he heard,” then called him up to heaven, and said, “ Come up hither, and I will shew you the things which must be hereafter ;” and now, in a series of the most splendid visions, these future things are embodied in the contents of the symbol of the book, represented to be in the

* Ch. i. v. 19.

right hand of the Lord God Almighty—a book which, in the presence of the whole assembled inhabitants of heaven, is taken by Christ, as being alone worthy to have possession thereof, and to open its seven seals. “The things which were to be hereafter,” are therefore assuredly involved in its contents; and hence I think we may with certainty infer, that, unsatisfactory as in general the interpretation has been, there is to be derived from their study, lessons and information of unutterable importance—particularly to us who are living so near their close, when the evidence becomes so much stronger, and the events so much more striking and marvellous.

The importance of the events embodied in the seven-sealed book is infinitely exalted by what immediately transpired on Jesus Christ, the all-atonement Lamb, taking it from the right hand of “HIM that sat upon the throne.” In the first instance, it is said, the entire company of disembodied spirits, “the general assembly of the church of the first-born in heaven;” and with them the risen saints, “the spirits of just men made perfect,” in humble adoration prostrated themselves “*before the Lamb*; having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of the saints.” From this latter expression, it would appear that there is a much greater connection, and a deeper interest existing, between

“The saints on earth, and all the dead,”

than is generally supposed; the prayers which they

offer to God the Father, through the merits and intercession of Christ, being represented as sweet odours in golden vials in the hands of *the whole redeemed Church*. From this being told us, it would likewise appear, that the church triumphant must of necessity be intimately acquainted with what is going forward in the church militant; and that the vial which hides the eternal world from our view, is in reality very thin: and the reflection is most pleasing. It likewise shews us in what light God regards the prayers of his saints; and how very precious they must be in his sight, thus to be offered with the adoration of the heavenly world, to “Him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.”

Further—on the fulfilment of the divine decrees being thus committed to Christ, they again, “having every one of them harps,” raise their harmonious voices in the accents of praise. But their song was not, according to the language used, as related in the last chapter, directed to God the Father, in celebration of His glorious perfections, and His wonders in the works of creation. They sung a *new* song!—a song in praise of the Son, saying, “THOU art worthy to take the book, and open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed *us* to God,” (thus, according to an observation previously made, identifying themselves as the ransomed church), “by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.”

They then express the degree of honour to which

they are *already* exalted: "And hast made us unto our God, **KINGS AND PRIESTS**;" that is, the whole of the church now in heaven, the whole of the righteous dead, are possessed of this high distinction—this is their present state.

They finish their song, however, with celebrating the still higher destiny that awaits them; a destiny which we are fully prepared to expect is in reserve for all the Lord's people, from what is promised in Daniel. There, after a description is given of the four great successive kingdoms which were to appear in the world, the announcement is made that "*the saints* of the Most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever." And again it is added, that "the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given *to the people of the saints* of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him."* Accordingly, in anticipation of this happy state of things, and in confirmation of this glorious promise, the church in heaven, whilst they are extolling the praises of their Saviour, exultingly exclaim, "And we shall reign on the earth." And it is another proof that both the four and twenty elders, and the four living creatures, represent the saints in glory; for it is language that we have no authority whatever in any part of the Bible to say could be used by angels, or by any but the saved of Adam's race.

* See Diss. p. 265—270.

After this distinct and rapturous adoration of the church, the Apostle says :

“ And I beheld, and I heard the voice of MANY ANGELS round about the throne, and the living creatures, and the elders ; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands, saying, with a loud voice : Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.” (v. 11—12.)

Here there are specially worthy of notice the persons who, for the first time, are now brought upon the scene, THE ANGELS ; *their position*, surrounding on every side the throne of God, and his redeemed church : *their very great numbers* ; which are expressed (Heb. xii. 22,) as “ an innumerable company of angels ;” or as Milton expresses it, “ numbers without number ;” ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands : lastly, *their song* ! “ Worthy is the Lamb that was slain ;” but they do not, they cannot add, with the church, *who hast redeemed us*.

I can imagine nothing within the scope of language that can come up to the sublimity of the scene which is here so simply, yet so forcibly represented ; but it is not yet completed. It is not sufficient that both portions of the redeemed church in glory, and that the countless number of angels, should all conspire in the blessed work of praising the Lamb that was slain—the WHOLE CREATION, under the four-fold division, in which it is frequently enumerated by the sacred writers, again reverberate the glorious theme.

“And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and are all that are in them, heard I, saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.” (v. 13.)

This manner of expressing the whole creation, is found, for instance, twice in the second commandment;* and in Philippians ii. it is used in exactly the same connection as in this place; that is, in the universal worship of Christ *as God*. As it is a striking passage, and sheds its light upon the one before us, I will transcribe it. “Let this same mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, *thought it not robbery to be equal with God*, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. *Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name that is above every name. That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,* OF THINGS IN HEAVEN, AND THINGS IN EARTH, AND THINGS UNDER THE EARTH. *And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*” (ver. 5—11.)

The whole of the chapter under consideration, affords the finest commentary on these words that it is possible to conceive. Here we see the manifestation of Christ’s exaltation; of the infinite superiority

* Ex. xx. 4—11.

of his great name above every name; and that at His name every knee *does bow*, “to the glory of God the Father,” saying, “Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.

What follows, and indeed concludes this splendid exhibition, affords additional proof of the high consideration and devotion of the church in heaven.

“And the four living creatures said Amen: and the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped Him that liveth for ever and ever.” (v. 14.)

In conclusion, I would observe, that there is no part of the Word of God, clear as it frequently is on this point, that more decidedly proves the Godhead of the Lord Jesus Christ, than this manifestation of his glory in the worship of all the hosts of heaven. For jealous as the Lord God hath declared himself of his honour in this respect, it is impossible that such adoration could have been permitted to any but to a divine person; “to Him that is my fellow, saith the Lord.” And the very particular mention of the whole race of created beings, without one exception—“every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them,”—precludes the possibility of Him being a created Being to whom this universal worship is paid. Besides which, he is mentioned as invested with the attributes of Deity, having, as the slain Lamb, seven horns, indicative of His almighty and

irresistible power, and seven eyes, indicative of His omnipresence. Therefore, let the church on earth join with that in heaven, and likewise say “Amen, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever;” and among that number my soul too would join and say, Amen.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FOUR FIRST SEALS;

SHEWING THE

GRADUAL PROGRESS OF THE FRIGHTFUL APOSTACY
OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST.

Opening of the First Seal—A very remarkable Era—Concern of the Church above respecting it—Its symbols and their meaning—Emperor Constantine and the triumph of Christianity over Paganism—Pagan persecutions—Apostate Julian—Opening of Second Seal—Meaning of the Symbols—Paganism destroyed by Theodosius—His character—The Church's fierce divisions and slaughter—Opening of the Third Seal—Emperor Justinian—His great actions and their lamentable influence on the Church—Its gross Darkness—Preservation of the Bible incorrupt—Opening of the Fourth Seal—The Church in a state of utter corruption—Charlemagne—Important era he formed—Confined to the Latin nations—Great misery of this period.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FOUR FIRST SEALS;

SHEWING THE

PROGRESS OF THE CHURCH'S FRIGHTFUL APOSTACY.

WITHOUT further ceremony the process of opening the respective Seals is now commenced; and the mighty course of God's providence, in the aspect and complexion which his church was to assume during the whole period of its militant state, until its safe and triumphant translation to glory, is, in rich, varied, and most significant emblems, thereby unfolded to our view.

THE OPENING OF THE FIRST SEAL;

Or the External Triumph of the Church.

“And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals; and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four living creatures saying, Come and see.

“And I saw, and lo! a white horse; and he that sat upon him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.” (vi. 1, 2.)

The import of these symbols appears to be, that they represent—

1. An era eminently attracting the notice of the world; for the Apostle was called to “come and see,” *in a voice of thunder*; implying that the event to which it referred should be one of the most superlatively surprising kind: much more so than any of the succeeding ones; for it is to be observed, that it is only this of all the seven seals that was thus uttered with this loud voice. We are to understand, therefore, that it applies to some most remarkable change—sudden, decisive, complete, and unexpected.

2. This voice of thunder is said, moreover, to proceed from one of the four living creatures, which, according to the explanation previously given, signifies, that it proceeds from a portion of the general assembly of the church, whose names are written in heaven; implying thereby that it has reference to concerns in which the church of Christ is essentially interested.

3. These great and surprising concerns are compared to a horseman or warrior coming forth riding on a horse of a white colour, emblematical of purity; armed with a bow, expressive of the strongest and most complete armour, according as it is said of Joseph, “his bow abode in strength;” and adorned with a crown or coronet, the reward of victory, of which indeed the whole scene is highly significant. And to this effect it is added, that “he went forth conquering, and to conquer,” or re-conquering; by which it seems to convey the idea that the conquest shall in a marked manner be revived.

From these explanations the whole appears to shadow forth some great conquest of the church in the person and by the exploits of a great warrior, or the ruling power of the world over its enemies.

We must now therefore come to history; and in doing so, we do indeed find that the first great and most surprising change after the Apostle's time that happened in the church's affairs, a change that altered the complexion of the world, was indeed one that corresponds in all respects with this striking imagery. That change was, the triumph over Paganism by the Emperor Constantine! The particulars of this great event are too well known to make it necessary to enter into them in this place. It may be briefly observed, that it was one that pre-eminently stood forward as of surpassing interest to the church, and was productive of the greatest and most important change it ever experienced. It found Christianity, however sullied it might have been in externals, pure at the vitals, and still shining with a brightness in all the essentials of godliness, of which not a brief description can give an adequate idea—hence the colour of whiteness is applied to the symbol of the horse.

It was an event which, in energy and vigour, in the manifest and unexpected strokes of an evident Divine interposition, was as striking as any of those which on former occasions had produced changes of empire; and the instrument which God used for its accomplishment, was well armed and qualified for the conflict. In the numerous battles which Con-

stantine fought as the champion for Christianity professedly against Paganism (for it was in the Sign of the Cross that he conquered :) he had indeed “a bow” which abode in strength—and he had “a crown,” the reward of victory, given to him. Thus the event answered to the prediction ; and I know of no other in the wide extent of church history that will answer to it. No change in the general aspect of its affairs had previously taken place—nothing whatever that had the characters of a prophetic era. The whole of the Roman emperors up to this period, had been high-priests and worshippers of the fabulous gods of the heathen world. In this number it may be noticed, after Trajan (by whom the Apostle was banished to Patmos) were Antoninus, Decius, and other names which are notorious as being persecutors of the Christians. Under the reigns of such men as these, the church had existed with little variation in her general aspect or external circumstances, struggling almost for her very existence. And this was more particularly the case immediately before this great deliverance was granted, or the systematically conducted assaults against its very being by Dioclesian, when the battle between the powers of heaven and hell appears to have been the hottest ; and so hot, that to human appearance the issue almost appeared dubious.

It was at this moment of extremity that Constantine was raised up, and it was by him that this prediction was accomplished in the complete conquests which God gave him over all his Pagan

competitors. The external glory which from henceforward surrounded the church is well likened to a bow and a crown : for from this time those who professed the Christian name, instead of being persecuted and trampled upon, were protected by the laws : instead of their lives, liberty, and property being perpetually exposed to violence, and hanging in jeopardy and suspense, they were placed on an equal footing with the Pagans, and enjoyed honour, peace, and security. Magnificent churches began every where to be erected, riches to flow in upon them, and such universal signs of prosperity to be enjoyed, that the change was as complete as it was lasting.

In this application of the prophecy, I am not called upon to detract from this honour and glory by the consideration of its lamentable deteriorating effects—these will be immediately considered. It is brought forward in this place, as shewing the exact character of the first great change of aspect which the church was to experience—its agreement to the letter with historical facts—and its consequent close fulfilment of the prophecy.

But it is not only said *to go on conquering*, but *to conquer*. Two periods are here designated. The former we have above considered ; the latter seems to allude to the desperate, tremendous, deeply-concerted, and well-conducted attempt of the Emperor Julian, the nephew of Constantine, to replace idolatry, and restore the expiring cause of Paganism. He did all that zeal and ability could do, during the two short years which Providence permitted him to rule over

the Roman world ; and it seems difficult to imagine, had a much longer reign been allowed him, how any thing but success could have attended his measures, and Paganism again become the religion of the empire. But this word stopped his further progress—the cause of Christianity was to go on conquering, and *to conquer*, and therefore it *did* conquer ; and the apostate himself, in his mortal agony, confessed it. “ O thou Galilean,” he exclaimed, writhing under a deadly wound, with his hand filled with blood, and casting it into the air, “ THOU HAST CONQUERED ! ”

OPENING OF THE SECOND SEAL ;

Or the Church in a state of fiery Division and Discord.

“ And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, Come and see. And there went forth another horse that was red : and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another : and there was given unto him a great sword.” (vi. 3, 4.)

Keeping in remembrance that “ a man on horseback, exhibited in divine vision, denotes the going forth of some power in military array divinely commissioned to effect changes upon the earth ; and that the character of the change is expressed by the colour of the horse ;” * and that the white horse denoted the considerable degree of real purity at that time in the

* Dean Woodhouse.

church, we hence infer that the red, or fire-coloured, denotes the church in a state of war or slaughter, angry, intolerant, and persecuting. And this state of murderous animosity is still more clearly expressed, by its being said that the effect of this change would be to "take peace from the earth, and they should kill one another;" and by the symbol of a "great sword." The omission of its being notified to the Apostle in a voice of thunder, shows that this change, although equally real, would be less apparent, and brought about in a more quiet way than the first great change from Paganism to Christianity.

We now again come to facts. It was but sixty or seventy years after the Revolution, symbolized by the first seal, that the great Theodosius was raised up to give the last blow to the idolatry of Paganism. He found it still the religion of the Senate;—the title, ensigns, and prerogatives of the sovereign pontiff, which had been instituted by Numa, and assumed by Augustus, had been accepted, inconsistent as it appears, by the preceding Christian emperors;—statues of the gods were still exposed to public adoration, and four hundred temples still remained open, and the fumes of idolatrous sacrifices were still tolerated. Under these circumstances, Theodosius, in a full meeting of the Senate, solemnly proposed the question, whether the worship of Christ, or that of Jupiter, should be the religion of the Romans? The issue of the appeal was, that the latter was degraded and condemned by a large majority; and from this moment Christianity became the religion of

the empire, as it had previously been that of the emperor. The heathen temples were therefore demolished ; it was made a capital crime to sacrifice, or to attend to Pagan rites ; and by the most severe and indeed sanguinary edicts, the whole system of the heathen mythology, which had been the boast and pride of so many years, gradually dissolved, and was brought into contempt. To use the language of the celebrated historian of Rome, the idol gods of eleven hundred years were “ dragged in triumph at the chariot wheels of Theodosius.”

Standing, as this great emperor did, “ the last of the successors of Augustus and Constantine, whose authority was universally acknowledged throughout the whole extent of the empire ;” and standing, as he did, its sole barrier from the barbarian nations which, immediately after his death, swept over it like a flood, he appears like a beacon upon the mountain top, or like a rock in the midst of the wide ocean. And it may be noticed as a very remarkable providence, that the abolition of idolatry, which he effected, was the means of more effectually strengthening the cause of Christianity, and better preparing it for that tremendous shock, which, on the ruin of the empire by the Goths and Vandals, levelled every thing else in the dust.

The Church however, amid these scenes of increasing outward prosperity, of which the reign of Theodosius thus forms a memorable epoch, gave likewise increasing signs of departure from the

truth of the gospel. As far as the personal character of the Emperor himself is concerned, there appears great reason to believe that he was a real Christian. "His clemency, liberality, and generosity," says Milner, "were admirable. He was brave and successful in war, but his wars were forced upon him. He was an enemy to drunkenness, and was himself a model of gravity, temperance, and chastity in private life." "I see," he adds, "in Theodosius the triumphs of the cross; nor in all the Pagan history of the Emperors was there any to be compared to him."

Notwithstanding all this excellence, however, such was the aspect of the times, that all he did only served to foster the seeds of corruption, degeneracy, and strife; and the aspect which the Church presented is found exactly to accord with the representation given in this Seal. It was to the last degree uncharitable, fiery, and revengeful—full of internal divisions and discord; and of such deadly animosity, as frequently, particularly in the election of bishops, to break out in mutual slaughter. The splendid triumphs of Constantine on the one hand, and the hostile spirit of Julian on the other, had until this time greatly restrained this factious disposition. But when relieved from Pagan hostility by the sword and edicts of Theodosius, the animosities of Christians towards each other exceeded all bounds; and the most bloody wars amongst themselves, united to the most detestable crimes, were the consequence.

Even the barbarian invasions but gave more play to

this lamentable spirit: for on the breaking up of the empire, and the church being thereby for a long period free from the restraints of civil government, all checks of this description were removed. The schism of the Donatists, a people who are not even accused by their adversaries of corrupt doctrine, nor of peculiar degeneracy in morals, and which had its origin in faction, and in a contest for worldly power, was the occasion of thousands of Christians perishing by the hands of each other. The Arian controversy likewise produced similar fruits, and of much longer duration. For other particulars, see Milner's and Mosheim's Histories of the Fifth and Sixth Centuries.

THE OPENING OF THE THIRD SEAL;

*Or the Church in a most deplorable state of
Degeneracy and Ignorance.*

“And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo, a black horse; and he that sat upon him had a yoke in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine.” (vi. 5, 6.)

The state of things just described continued, until, in the providence of God, Justinian mounted the imperial throne, when another new and decisive change took place. “And lo!”—an exclamation of surprise that was not uttered on the opening of the second seal,—

“and lo,” a black horse! denoting mourning and woe, darkness and ignorance. “And by him that sat on the horse having a yoke in his hand, is signified a state of bondage to ceremonies, authorized penances, rigorous fastings, and monkish austerities—a state directly opposite to that of the happy liberty of the Gospel, and to which we are exhorted to ‘stand fast, and resist every attempt’ to subject us to ordinances and a yoke of bondage.”*

With regard to the character and acts of Justinian, a good deal has been advanced in the work on Old Testament prophecies,† from which it will be perceived what a lasting and portentous influence his reign had on the religious aspect of the times: and it is almost sufficient to refer to what is there said respecting the epoch which he formed in the Christian church, to shew its peculiar adaptation to this season of mourning and spiritual famine here described. His victorious career, added to his great talents, enabled him to hold with a firm hand the reins of government; and to silence the discord of war and contending factions in the church. But in doing this he created a new era, and set the seal of his overwhelming authority to evils of greater magnitude; and the cessation of those bitter feuds settled down, as a natural consequence, into a state of gross spiritual darkness, ignorance, and the most deplorable spiritual oppression throughout the whole of the Christian world.

* Gal. v. 1; Col. ii. 16; 1 Pet. ii. 16.

† Diss. pp. 245, 251.

This was more effectually accomplished by means of the code of laws which this emperor promulgated, and which are even famous to this day. In these he new-modelled the laws of the empire; and likewise, besides numerous separate edicts, he incorporated the ordinances relative to the regulation of church discipline; making his own faith the rule and measure of orthodoxy to the whole empire. Indeed it was one of the chief businesses of this emperor's eventful life, to interfere with every thing, and with the most arbitrary authority to order every thing respecting church affairs. In character Milner represents him, though chaste and temperate, the slave of superstition and avarice, and the consequence of all his schemes to have been "dissensions and schisms, forced conversions attended with cruelties, which alienated men's minds still more from godliness, the growth of superstition and formality, the miserable declension of real internal godliness, and the increase of ignorance and practical wickedness."

The sole object and attention of the ministers of religion, from the highest to the lowest, appear to have been schemes of ambition and avarice; and no arts are represented to have been too gross to satisfy their rapacity, nor any crimes so flagrant of which they were not guilty. The language of Mosheim is, that at this time "the cause of true religion sank apace, and the gloomy reign of superstition extended itself in proportion to the decay of genuine godliness. This lamentable decay," he says, "was sup-

plied by a multitude of rites and ceremonies." In short, the austerities and abstinence of monks, the number of which was prodigiously increased; the senseless round of ridiculous and most unauthorized mortifications, penances, and rigorous fastings, imposing a most oppressive and intolerable yoke, superseded altogether the simplicity of Gospel truth; whilst the most corrupt doctrines, such as the worshipping of images, relics, and saints; prayers for the dead, tales of purgatory, the efficacy of good works, and the traditions of men, took place of the word of God.

Such was the direful state of the visible church universally throughout both the eastern and western portions of the empire at this era of its history. It is well that a voice from the highest authority and most dread command—for it is stated to be from the midst of the four living creatures who were stationed close around the throne, and therefore it was the voice of God—it is well that such a word offered one restraint to its most pernicious consequences. The meaning of this voice, divested of metaphor, is, that although there should be a dreadful scarcity of the word of life,—for the famine here spoken of, means “Not a famine of bread, nor a thirst of water, but of hearing the words of the Lord,”* of that bread by which the souls of men are fed and sustained,—yet that there should be some supply of this living food left, though it should be exceedingly scarce, and

* Amos viii. 11.

purchased at a high price ; and that it should be, though in such small quantity, pure and uninjured.

The word thus spoken by God, has, it is our happiness to experience, been, during the long progress of these dark times, *wonderfully fulfilled*. There has always been a moderate supply of spiritual food. The grand saving doctrine of Christianity, of salvation by faith through the blood and righteousness of Christ, has always been taught. “ And that invaluable store-house and repository of Divine knowledge, of spiritual wine and oil, *the holy Bible, the word of God*, has been accessible to some persons in all times since this injunction was delivered. Through all the ignorant, fanatical, factious, and corrupt hands, by which this sacred treasure has been delivered down to us, it has passed, in the main, *uninjured*. The corruptions of it, even for the base purposes of party zeal and worldly domination, have been *miraculously few*. Thus hath the prophetic injunction from the throne been wonderfully fulfilled, through a dark period of long continuance, and of great difficulty and danger. “ *The oil and the wine have not been injured.*”*

THE OPENING OF THE FOURTH SEAL;

Or the utter and entire Corruption of the Visible Church, and its attendant Miseries.

“ And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, Come and see. And I looked,

and lo ! a pale livid-green* horse ! and his name that sat upon him was Death, and hell followed with him. And power was given unto him over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.” (vi. 7, 8.)

It might have been imagined that no state could have been worse than the one which has just been described ; yet here we have another of still deeper horror and guilt presented to our view ; and history fully verifies the prophecy that another gradation of ecclesiastical barbarism, still more terrific than the former, did, at the time we are about to consider, set in the deepest gloom over the fourth part of the empire, and one that in all respects answered to the symbols of this seal.

The horse here is represented the livid colour of corruption—“ of a grassy green which, though beautiful in the clothing of the trees and fields, is very unseemly, disgusting, and even horrible, when it appears upon flesh.”

“ There is a sublime climax,” observes Dean Woodhouse, “ or scale of terrific images exhibited in the colours of the horses in the four first seals, denoting the progressive character of the Christian times. It begins with *pure white*, then changes to *fiery*, or vengeful ; then to *black*, or mournful ; and when we imagine nothing more dreadful in colour can appear, then comes another gradation in colour much more terrific, even this ‘ deadly pale.’ ” But this is not all—“ he that sat upon him ” his name was Death, he is not described ; the picture of this

* Dean Woodhouse’s translation.

grisly king of terrors, so mounted, is left to be supplied by the imagination of the reader. "And hell followed with him"—that is, the receptacle of the dead, the place of departed souls—implying that there was a more dreadful enemy in regions beyond the grave—signifying, both images taken together, the destruction in the heart of all true religion, and the extinction of all spiritual life—and every horrible and dreadful result that can flow from such a state of things.

At the head of this fourth change in the aspect of the church, stands the name of CHARLEMAGNE, who reigned from the year 768 to 814. "We are penetrating," says Mr. Milner, in commencing his history of the ninth century, "a land of deserts and pits, a land of drought, and of the shadow of death; and are carried, by every step, into scenes still more gloomy than the former." Baronius, a popish writer, calls it "an iron age, barren of all goodness; a leaden age, abounding in all wickedness; and a dark age, remarkable above all others for a scarcity of writers and men of letters." The often repeated language of Mosheim, speaking of these centuries, is in the same strain. He speaks of "the astonishing ignorance that gave a loose rein both to superstition and immorality"—of the thick darkness, the clouds of ignorance, which universally prevailed—of the Latins presenting a spectacle almost without exception sunk in the most brutish and barbarous ignorance—a dismal night of ignorance, covered with a thick and gloomy veil of superstition and cruelty,

and other epithets shewing that it was an era that is well designated as *the dark ages*.

Charlemagne himself, whose private character, amidst all his splendid and valuable qualities, was any thing but influenced by Christian principles, endeavoured to stem the torrent of this most deplorable and degenerate state of ignorance and vice ; but the methods he took only riveted the chains of superstition and priestly tyranny stronger and firmer, and opened the sources of corruption wider. “The epoch,” observes Mr. Hallam, “made by Charlemagne in the history of the world, has cast a lustre over his head, and testifies to the greatness that has embodied itself in his name. He possessed in every thing that grandeur of conception that distinguishes extraordinary minds. Like Alexander he seemed born for innovation—perhaps his greatest eulogy is written *in the disgraces of succeeding times*, and in the miseries of Europe. In the dark ages of European history, the reign of Charlemagne affords a solitary resting place between two long periods of turbulence and ignorance.”

Dr. Robertson, likewise speaking of this great prince, says, “All the calamities which flow from anarchy and discord, returning with additional force, afflicted the different kingdoms into which his empire was split. From that time to the seventeenth century, a succession of uninteresting events fill and deform the annals of all the nations of Europe. Charlemagne in France, and Alfred the Great in England, endeavoured to dispel this darkness, and

gave their subjects a short glimpse of light and knowledge. But the ignorance of the age was too powerful for their efforts and institutions. *The darkness returned, and settled over Europe more thick and heavy than before.*”

This sad darkness was followed by a corresponding wickedness. Hence the same author observes—and it will suffice in drawing this dismal picture—that “a greater number of those atrocious actions which fill the mind of man with astonishment and horror, occur in the history of the centuries under review, than in that of any period of the same extent in the annals of Europe. If we open the history of Gregory of Tours, or of any contemporary author, we meet with a series of deeds of cruelty, perfidy, and revenge, so wild and enormous as almost to exceed belief.”

We now come to the next particular in the great change from bad to worse which is exhibited in this seal—and that its LIMITATION—“power was given him over the *fourth part* of the earth,” and this we shall find exactly applies to the era formed by Charlemagne. The preceding ones—viz. those formed by the reigns of Constantine, Theodosius, and Justinian, each extended over the length and breadth of the whole Roman empire, in all the three quarters of the world, Europe, Asia, and Africa—whereas the sway of Charlemagne, great as it was, extended to only about “a fourth part.” The western portion of the empire is, as we shall here-

after find in explaining the “trumpets,” considered as a “third part”—but, according to Gibbon, “only two thirds” of the western empire of Rome were subject to Charlemagne; and the petty sovereigns of the remaining part of it, including England and Spain, implored the honour of his alliance, and styled him their common parent, the emperor of the West.”

With the greatest historic accuracy, therefore, the fourth part is here mentioned as the more immediate sphere of the operation of this seal—and it is a limitation that was especially necessary to be noticed, because no new era was formed in the East at this period; besides which the West was the more immediate and proper territorial limits of the fourth great empire of the world. It was likewise at this time, on the occasion of the Western imperial Headship being revived in the person of Charlemagne, that the Greek and Latin, or the Eastern and Western churches, were finally and irrevocably separated.

The power that was thus given to the fourth part of the empire was “to slay by sword, and by famine, and by pestilence, and by the beasts of the earth;” which would seem to imply that all sorts of devastation and destruction—that “death,” in all its most horrid forms, was to ride triumphant during this devoted period. The visible church being now plunged into all the idolatry and superstition and unparalleled wickedness of popery, which had struck at the very vitals of godliness, and being thus disunited

from Christ her living head, was plunged thereby into the lowest and deepest abyss of misery. Perhaps its meridian may be considered to have been from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries, and to have been most clearly manifested in its direful effects by the Crusades. Mr. Hallam remarks, that “to engage in the Crusades, and to perish in them, were synonymous;” and that “they drained to the lees the cup of misery.” Of the first, he says, “So many crimes and so much misery have seldom been accumulated in so short a space as in the three first years of this enterprize;” and of the last, “that such calamities now fell upon this devoted army, as have scarce ever been surpassed—hunger and want of every kind, aggravated by an unsparing pestilence.” And these were not casual evils—they were caused by the spirit of the times, the withering influence of the prevailing apostacy, the death-cold shade of the almost universal dominion of Satan over the hearts and consciences of men, and the almost total absence of the Word of God. Thus was the visible church, in what are immediately called the Latin nations—for these are the fourth part of the earth here spoken of—given up to a total state of corruption. Thus, did Death both morally, spiritually, and physically reign; and thus did, most emphatically, “hell” follow!

CHAPTER V.

CONTINUATION OF THE SEALS;

OR

THE PARTIAL RECOVERY OF THE CHURCH AT THE
REFORMATION;

AND

THE APPEARANCE AND ACTINGS OF INFIDELITY,
AS EXHIBITED IN THE CONSEQUENCES

OF

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION.

General observations on the preceding Seals, and the Apostacy they pourtray—Where spoken of in the Old Testament—They form epochas of History—Theodosius—Unity of the four first Seals—Danger of Prosperity to the Church exemplified—THE REFORMATION—The age of Martyrs—Its influence—Its instruments—Abilities of the reigning Monarchs—Persecutions—St. Bartholomew's Massacre and others—Cry for Vengeance—Future Persecutions yet to take place—THE FRENCH REVOLUTION—Symbols of the Sixth Seal explained to refer to it—Exemplified the principles of Infidelity.

CHAPTER V.

CONTINUATION OF THE SEALS;

OR THE

REFORMATION AND THE FRENCH REVOLUTION.

BEFORE proceeding to the consideration of the Fifth Seal, it appears so desirable and important to make good the ground over which we have already trodden, that I will yet trouble the reader with a few general observations with the view more firmly to establish the foregoing interpretation.

First.—I would observe that the Great Apostacy into which the church fell, as detailed in the last chapter, is so very remarkable and important an event in its history, it covers so large a space of time, and it so completely absorbs all other, both ecclesiastical and secular, events, within its vortex, that it is probable—it is what we might expect—that it would occupy the most prominent place in any prophecy or revelation that God might be pleased to give of its “fates and fortunes:” in fact, that it

would and must occupy that place which it does occupy as the ground-work of all that follows.

Second.—I would observe that it does, at least by implication and in general terms, occupy such prominent place in the Old Testament prophecies: as for instance in what is described as the “little horn” of popery, which was to wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change the times and the laws for the space of 1260 years,* which could not be without the great declension. Moreover it is said that the little horn of Mahometanism was to appear when “transgressors were come to the full.”† And in the last Great Vision of Daniel, that “the daily sacrifice should be taken away, and the abomination that astonisheth or maketh desolate be placed.”‡ All these must have a reference to this complete yet gradual and long apostacy, as there appears no other similar event to which they can apply. If this, therefore, was so decidedly revealed under the Jewish dispensation, we ought to consider it as a matter of course, that a thing that enters so completely into the essentials of the history of the Christian dispensation would, and must be, one chief thing noticed in a Christian prophecy.

Third.—I would observe that it is perfectly analogous to what we find in the prophet Daniel, to pre-signify and arrange what shall befall the church according to the succession of those ruling sove-

* See Diss. pp. 214—227.

† Ibid. pp. 303, 304.

‡ Ibid. 323.

reigns, whose reigns form remarkable epochs, and change the face of society ; since it is in such changes that its interests are necessarily and essentially involved. To give a familiar illustration of what I mean, and one that will strike home to all our hearts, I would ask, How otherwise could the epocha in the English church be marked ? In laying down its great outline, should we not, without a moment's hesitation, fix upon Alfred the Great, William the Conqueror, Henry the Eighth, and William the Third, as each having given a colour and complexion to the generations that respectively followed their reigns ? Most assuredly we should. It is just so in the present instance. The reigns of Constantine, Theodosius, Justinian, and Charlemagne changed the aspect of the church in like manner ; and the divisions are so broad and so well marked, that we have only to take up the works of the greatest historians, such as Gibbon, Mosheim, and others, to be assured that these names form the great and leading resting-places at which they all stop. Gibbon, for instance, particularly quits his narrative, and rests at the reigns of Constantine and Justinian ; Mosheim, at those of Constantine, Charlemagne, and Charles V. ; these being what he calls “ remarkable periods, distinguished by signal revolutions or remarkable events ;” and so of others. That of the emperor Theodosius, it is true, though not less real, is not so broadly defined ; and hence it is very observable, that it is the only one of the four which was not so striking to the mind of the Apostle, and at which he

did not utter an exclamation of surprise. On the appearance of the first, third, and fourth horses, it will be perceived that he said, “ I beheld,” or “ I beheld, and lo ! ”—but on that of the second he simply says, “ And there went out another horse.” With such minute accuracy is every thing here worded !

The reign of Theodosius too is more generally omitted as a division of history, from coming so near that of Constantine ; there being only about sixty years between them. But this is no objection to its forming an epoch in history ; for, as Mr. Hallam well observes, “ the continuous chain of transactions in the stage of human society, is ill defined by mere lines of chronological demarcation—and that many considerable portions of time, especially before the twelfth century,”—and this observation eminently applies to the long lapse of time, (above seven centuries,) occupied by the fourth seal,—“ may justly be deemed so barren of events worthy of remembrance, that a single sentence or paragraph is often sufficient to give the character of entire generations, and of long dynasties of obscure kings.”

In connection with the above observation, it may be curious to notice this stream of deterioration as it passed through these four great eras, by just giving the space between each of the great sovereigns who, in the providence of God, formed them :—

Constantine reigned from A.D.	303 to 337.
Theodosius.....	383 to 395.
Justinian	527 to 565.
Charlemagne.....	768 to 814.

The first forms an epoch of about 60 years ; the second of about 170 ; the third of about 250 ; and the last, as above observed, and as will be immediately explained, of above 700 years.

Fourth.—The next observation I would make is, that although the church was so changed under the progress of these four distinct successive eras, as no longer to *appear the same*—the first being that of white, or having the character of purity—the second red, or that of slaughter—the third black, or that of ignorance—and the fourth livid, or that of corruption ; yet still, together with this distinctness, there is also observed an *unity*. “ They are all *horses* ; and all pass by a regular gradation from one colour to another ; from the mild and peaceful rule displayed in the character of the first horse, to the dreadful tyranny of Death and Hell, which characterizes the last. This unity and completion of parts is also insinuated by their being contained under the cardinal number *four*, answering to the four sides of the Throne, and to the four living creatures there stationed, who speak on the opening of each seal, until the voices have gone through the complete square of the throne.”* Carry this idea to its type, the encampment of the twelve tribes in the wilderness, and we see, in a most beautiful light, that “ the whole assembly of the church of the first-born, which are written in heaven,” are represented as most deeply interested in the church on

* Dean Woodhouse.

earth. "This unity," the Dean goes on to observe, "also accords with that of the four first trumpets, and of the four first vials, as will be seen in their places:" and that certainly in this book of Revelation, the number *seven*, the number of perfection, evidently divides into the component parts of *four* and *three*, both in the seals, the trumpets, and in the vials.

Fifth.—The last observation I would make, with regard to these four first seals, is this—that they may be summed up in a very few words, as exhibiting the church *in a state of increasing external splendour, attended by a proportionate internal decay!* The providence speaks volumes to all of us; and it is a most striking lesson, if we would but look at it in this light, awfully confirming the repeated warnings given in the Scriptures of the intoxicating nature of worldly and outward prosperity in all its forms. Satan tempted our Lord with the dominion and glory of this world, which was all he could offer; and although he could not but fail here, he has nevertheless ever been too successful with mere mortals, both in their individual and public capacities. In the present instance he made the largest stride ever beheld, and deceived the world in one vast mass—and this veil of ignorance and corruption is still, to an incalculable extent, overspreading with the gloom of death the greater part of the world.

It speaks especially to churches; and accommodating it to their present aspect, it speaks likewise to societies, not to be high-minded, but fear; not to

seek great things for themselves, as it regards worldly distinction, and notice, and wealth, but to be satisfied with a humble, lowly condition, looking to God, and depending upon his blessing, and keeping at the foot of the cross.

THE OPENING OF THE FIFTH SEAL;

Or the Age of Martyrs, and the Church's partial recovery.

“ And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw, under the altar, the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held. And they cried, with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth ! And white robes were given unto every one of them ; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also, and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.” (vi. 9—11.)

In the great change symbolized by this Seal, the instrumentality also changes—it is no longer, as in the former seals, brought about by the illustrious of the world, by emperors, kings, or warriors—it is brought about by inward causes, *in opposition* to the prevailing apostacy and the ruling powers. It was the voice of a part of the ransomed church in glory, that, on the opening of each of those, called out, “ Come and see.” It is still a part of such church that again speaks, but it is a select part—it is “ the souls of those that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held :” in other

words, it is the souls of the martyrs of Jesus, crying aloud, not again to “come and see” the outward progress of Christianity in its association with the grandeur of the world, but its progress as opposed to the wickedness of the times ; its progress in the re-action that has taken place ; and the reception it has experienced. All this very clearly appears from the phraseology of this seal, viz. that under the altar, the mercy seat, the most holy place, (that is, where the presence of God is,) there is a host of disembodied spirits, who have, under the new order of things that has taken place, been “slain for the Word of God, and for the testimony which they held,” whose blood cries out to God the Sovereign Lord, the arbiter and disposer of all things, for vengeance ; implying that the whole time this Seal shall be in operation it shall more or less be a season of persecution, in which those who hold a faithful testimony for God, in opposition to the prevailing corruption, should do so at the risk of their lives.

And all this has happened ! This fifth great scene in the Christian drama has been faithfully exhibited on the stage of time ; and it will be readily identified, in what is emphatically called the REFORMATION, and the consequences that flowed from it in that and the succeeding ages.

The Revolution which this great event brought to pass in public opinion, and in the views and sentiments of mankind, was greater and more marked than any which had transpired since the days of

Constantine, or the opening of the first seal. As hath been already noticed, this, and the three following, were, in their general principle, homogeneous, presenting us in regular gradation, in four distinct eras, the general view of the progress of outward Christianity, from its victory over paganism, to its utmost corruption and degeneracy under the papal usurpation. But the Reformation was of a character altogether new ; it was the victorious struggle of better principles, the re-action of Gospel truth and light over the prevailing error and darkness, ameliorating the whole surface of society, producing new habits of thought, and extending its most beneficent effects and saving influence to the most distant parts of the globe. It was a tremendous, and to a very great extent a successful attack on the power of Satan in his stronghold of popery, the western "little horn of Daniel," throughout the whole of the Latin empire ; and it was a change, great as it was, brought about by such humble instruments, that they are not even named or hinted at. It was a silent unexpected blow from a quarter from which of all others no apparent danger to the apostate power of Rome had, or could have been, apprehended.

There had been nothing at all like it in the world, since the first propagation of the Gospel, when God chose the weak things of this world in the persons of the twelve Apostles, and the first preachers of the Gospel, to demolish the paganism of the heathen world. He now chose similar instruments to bring to the ground the paganism of the Christian world :

He chose LUTHER, an obscure monk, endowed him with the most extraordinary qualities for the great work he had to accomplish, gave him a deep and wonderful insight into the essentials of divine truth, anointed his soul with an extraordinary unction of the divine Spirit; and thus armed, sent him forth to contend with the abounding error, and darkness, and iniquity, supported, as this state of things then was, by all the power and authority of the kings and great men of the earth. A host of similar men, led on and encouraged by his great example, likewise appeared in Germany, Switzerland, England, and more or less in the other western nations, and boldly preached the truth as it is in Jesus—and great was their success.

And it is to be remarked, that this wonderful prosperity in the preaching of the Gospel was not effected whilst Satan held his sceptre now, any more than in the times of the heathen emperors, in weak and feeble hands. As if more decidedly to display the all-conquering power and efficacy of the Word of God, dispensed in its simplicity and plainness, undiluted by man's wisdom and traditions, it was so ordered that the throne of the Cæsars, the successor of Augustus and Constantine, should, at this time, be filled by the emperor Charles the Fifth, a man, who, besides his shining abilities, inherited more dominions than any European monarch had done since the time of Charlemagne. That likewise Francis I. should be the reigning monarch of France; Henry VIII. of England; and that the pontifical

throne should be filled by Leo the Tenth. The whole of these contemporary and chief sovereigns of the papal world, were, as well as the head of the empire, likewise men of distinguished abilities; such, perhaps, as Europe had never before seen at any one time; and they were all strongly attached to the papacy, and equally wedded to the prevailing apostacy and corruption of the times. They all consequently resisted, to the utmost of their power in their respective dominions, the progress of this great reformation; and although our own monarch was brought ultimately to favour it, yet he is no exception to this observation, as the slightest knowledge of his actions, character, and motives, abundantly testify.

Precisely the same results that took place on the first preaching of the Gospel, whilst Satan held the world in heathen darkness, now took place on its faithful preaching in the midst of Popish darkness; the most determined opposition which it met with from the ruling powers, showed itself in exactly the same way; and from time to time, for nearly three hundred years, (about the same period, in fact, that the persecutions of the pagans lasted) have the unoffending disciples of the Lord Jesus been persecuted unto death, and with even more savage cruelty than that of a Trajan, Nero, and Diocletian.

It comports not with this brief outline, to descend into the particulars of the dreadful scenes in which their blood has been spilt. The histories of the church, and the books of martyrs, have made the

sanguinary history familiar to most readers. As pre-eminent in guilt and atrocity, it may be sufficient to mention a few of the principal instances—and first the dreadful massacre of St. Bartholomew in France, under Charles IX. At the time when this took place, the principal Protestants in the kingdom were, by invitation in Paris, under a solemn oath of safety. But, regardless of oaths, instruments of destruction had been put in the hands of above sixty thousand furious and bigoted Papists; and on the 24th of August, 1572, at an appointed signal, this numerous band of assassins was let loose on the Protestant part of the population; and in three days of continued slaughter, such as the annals of pagan persecution never recorded, a great multitude of persons of all ranks were indiscriminately butchered; and a scene of things was exhibited which, though many have attempted to describe, beggars, in its atrocity and infernal cruelty, all the powers of language. From Paris, the massacre spread throughout the whole kingdom, and similar scenes of cruelty were every where repeated on the Protestant portion of its numerous population.

A few years after this happened, the severest persecutions fell upon the protestants in Holland and Flanders, under the merciless and unrelenting hands of the Duke of Alva, by command of Philip II., where neither age, sex, nor condition was spared. In England, those under queen Mary are well known, as well as those in the Irish rebellion in 1641; and what, for many years, followed the revocation of the

edict of Nantz, under Lewis XIV., when the dragoons hunted and destroyed the Protestants like wild beasts. But the accounts of the innumerable company of martyrs, who have died in these great and marked persecutions, give, after all, but a poor idea of the real number of those who have suffered. For when it is considered that in most of the papal countries all who have embraced the principles of the Reformation have been, by the strong arm of power, put down; and in most instances, through the silent workings of that dark and hellish engine of cruelty the Inquisition, quietly and unobtrusively tortured and murdered; and that England alone, of all the ten kingdoms, may be said to have had a full respite, it may truly be denominated the age of martyrs. So that as truly as the church, during the four first periods, presented the respective and gradual stages of decay and corruption, so truly does it now present the aspect of persecution.

Hence, with appropriate scenery, this epoch is represented as exhibiting the souls of those who have perished, “as under the altar,” in allusion to the pouring out of the blood at the bottom of the altar,* crying with a loud voice for vengeance “How long,” they say, “sovereign Lord,”—or the dread arbiter of life and death, for the term here used is a title implying terror,—“How long, sovereign Lord, the Holy One and True, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?” If it were said

* Lev. iv. 7, 18, 25, 34; v. 9; ix. 9.

to Cain, “Thy brother’s blood crieth to me from the ground :” and further, “He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye”—and “it were better for that man that a mill-stone was hanged about his neck, and he was cast into the sea :”—where shall such persecutors appear ! We are in fact informed, that vengeance only *sleeps* ; and, in the mean while, that white robes are given unto EVERY ONE of those who had been thus slain, as a distinguished mark of honour and reward for what they had suffered for Christ.

“And it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also, and their brethren that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.” This language, to my mind, implies, that persecution *unto death* will not be confined to this seal. It is spoken to those who form a part of it ; and, therefore, that part of it which looks to the future, “*until* their brethren should be killed as they were,” must have reference to the next seal. As much as to say, that the martyrs who suffer under this epoch in the church’s history, have an assurance given, that vengeance will come ; but not until others of their brethren have suffered, under another epoch that shall transpire, and that then it will no longer delay. I have drawn attention to this, because it is in exact harmony with what is yet to follow.

The state of things to which the Reformation gave birth, lasted from the beginning of the sixteenth to the latter end of the eighteenth century. The revi-

val it occasioned in religion, in no instance came up to the expectations that were formed of it by those who witnessed the splendid successes of the first reformers. It was indeed firmly established in England, in a great part of Germany, and in some of the more northern nations; but in consequence of the most severe persecutions it met with in France, Spain, Portugal, and of course in all the states of Italy the head quarters of the apostacy, it was in those countries successfully resisted. Although, however, it was comparatively but “a little help,”* yet it was a blessed period, as we individually have reason to testify ; for we live and enjoy our privileges under its shade, and in the blessings it conveyed.

THE OPENING OF THE SIXTH SEAL ;

Or the actings of Infidelity in the French Revolution.

“ And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal ; and lo, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood ; and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig-tree casteth her untimely figs when she is shaken of a mighty wind : and the heaven departed as a scroll, when it is rolled together, and every mountain and island were removed out of their places : and the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bond-man, and every free-man, hid themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains ; and said unto the mountains and the rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb : for the great day of his wrath is come ; and who shall be able to stand ? ”

* See Diss. ch. xii. p. 325, 326.

I consider it to be of the greatest importance to the right interpretation of this seal, that we have a proper understanding of the symbols. Before therefore I make any observations I will proceed to explain them.

1. *An earthquake* is always understood to signify the sudden revolution of a kingdom or empire, as in Haggai ii. 6, 7; Joel ii. 10; and Heb. xii. 26. To this purpose Mede observes, that it implies, not a destruction, but an extraordinary alteration in the face of things—in the same way as a literal earthquake changes the position of the earth's surface, by exalting valleys and depressing hills, turning the channels and courses of rivers, and such like changes. Sir Isaac Newton likewise says, that “great earthquakes, and the shaking of heaven and earth, are put for the shaking of kingdoms, so as to distract and overthrow them.”

2. The sun, the moon, and the stars signify the sovereign ruler, his subjects, and the chief men of such kingdom; the sun becoming black as sackcloth of hair, the total eclipse of the sovereignty; and the moon becoming as blood, the whole kingdom filled with slaughter; and the stars falling to the earth like figs when shaken with a great wind, all persons in superior ranks and situations, holding offices of trust or honour, deprived of them by sudden and overwhelming violence.

3. The heaven departing as a scroll when it is rolled together, or as a roll when he that extends

it quits his hold, the entire disappearance of the whole political heaven or system.

4. Every mountain or island being removed out of their places, that every kingdom, and every independant lesser state, should be altered in their position.

5. The remainder of the symbols signify the great, the exceeding great, alarm and terror that would be felt by the kings, the great men, and people of every rank and grade in society, at these events ; and the endeavours of all to escape the impending and apprehended dangers that should be thickening around them, by hiding themselves in the most secure and inaccessible places, and by most perseveringly using every means in their power, at all sacrifices, to avert them. "The language describes a flight of the utmost terror and dismay before a victorious enemy, who having destroyed all the fortresses and cities, pursues the hopeless fugitives into their last places of refuge." It likewise expresses that a general apprehension should be felt, that the appointed time of God's judgments upon the world, or the time of his severe retribution and vengeance, has arrived ; and hence it is expressed that there was felt all the terrors of the day of final judgment.

Such is the explanation of these striking symbols. We now turn again to history, and it is to no distant history, to find the exact reflection of this important prediction : and we accordingly do find that the next great event, having the characters of a prophetic

era, (one that forms a new epocha in the church's affairs, altering the state of society, producing new habits of thought, and involving the interests of the world in its vortex) does thus answer to it. This event was a great Revolution, attended with all the consequences that are here described ; and all my readers will undoubtedly be beforehand with me in pronouncing it to be that awful Revolution which burst upon the world in France in the year 1789. It has already been so particularly described in the Dissertation on the Prophecies of the Old Testament, in connexion with the bearing it has on the restoration of the Jews—first, in ch. vi. p. 124 to 134 ; and secondly, in a more particular description of its chief actor, the Emperor Napoleon, in ch. xii. p. 329 to 340 ; that it is unnecessary to go into many particulars in this place. What I would wish to press upon the attention of my readers, is the exact adaptation of the events that have happened, in connexion with this most unparalleled catastrophe, to what I have above explained ; and the certainty there is, that in the whole range of history they can apply to no other.

If the interpretation which I have offered of the five preceding seals, fail to prove the comprehensive extent over which this series of visions spreads, forming the first great outline of a history which, in the subsequent parts of the Revelation, is filled up by the same prophetic Spirit, this appears to set the matter quite at rest. For as I have before observed, prophecy is not loose in its application, and of that

undefined character which some people are apt to suppose. On the contrary, the more closely it is analyzed, the more is it capable of a very high and close degree of demonstration.

In the onward course of events therefore, after the era formed by the Reformation had passed, the change that took place was one that in all points corresponded with the contents of this sixth seal. A great revolution *did* take place—the kingly power *was* obscured or eclipsed—the mass of the subjects of the kingdom *did* become blood—men who in any way rose above their fellow-creatures, *did* lose their standing, and “equality” was the watchword—the political heaven *did* disappear—every kingdom and all the minor independent states, which might be compared to clusters of islands were moved out of their places—and the “kings of the earth,” (which proves at least this must have happened *after* the division of the empires into kingdoms,) and all their subjects *were* in expressible alarm and dread, and fancied the day of judgment was at hand. These things *have* happened, and happened in connection with a great change in the outward aspect of the church, brought about by the French revolution.

It was a *new enemy* to vital godliness that at this time appeared, and was the occasion of bringing about this new situation in which the church found itself. Instead of being, as heretofore, in the hands of Popery—instead of being either sunk in its darkness and apostacy, or exposed to its persecutions, during this period Christianity was exposed to the actings

of Infidelity ; and in the contents of this seal, those principles are brought to the life, and their effects fearfully exhibited. For it was infidelity, or an utter contempt of God's most holy word, and an utter rejection of Christ, that brought France to a state of revolution ; and with that, its train of attendant miseries. And although the alarms and commotions which it occasioned subsided with the great battle of Waterloo, when its great champion and head was defeated and dethroned, yet the principle has, in a yet more direct way before this seal closes, to be directed against "the servants of God !" The consideration however of this, which involves such deeply interesting events to the true church, and sadly, yet triumphantly, is to close the present dispensation, must be left to the next chapter.



CHAPTER VI.

THE

SUSPENSION OF THE FEARFUL DOOM
HANGING OVER THE NATIONS;

THE

SEALING AND PRESERVATION OF THE SERVANTS OF
GOD AFTER A PERIOD OF PERSECUTION;

AND THE

OPENING OF THE SEVENTH SEAL.

*Present state of peace—Most destructive wars only suspended—
Deliverance of the righteous from them—Their sealing—Their
symbolical number—Their characters—Nature of their preser-
vation—A newly-arrived company seen in Heaven—Proof
that it is Heaven—That they are newly arrived—That they
have experienced a great Salvation—Their Song—That they
came out of a great Tribulation—That they are the company
that was sealed—Their arrival in Heaven appears to have been
a Translation—Arguments to prove this to be probable—Nothing
incredible, and why—Seventh Seal—A solemn and awful pause
—General observations.*

CHAPTER VI.

THE PRESERVATION OF THE SERVANTS
OF GOD

FROM THE FEARFUL PREDICTED RUIN ;

AND THE

OPENING OF THE SEVENTH SEAL.

HAVING thus disposed of that part of the contents of the seven-sealed book which is PAST, bringing it down, through the commotions of the French Revolution, to the memorable period of the Battle of Waterloo, we are now come to that which is PRESENT.

“And after these things,” the Apostle goes on to say, “I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. And I saw another Angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the Living God : and he cried with a loud voice to the four Angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.” (vii. 1—3.)

Three things are here very apparent—

1. That there should, after the events already described on opening the sixth seal have passed, be a

very remarkable season of quietness, and suspension from the horrors of war.

In the language of Scripture, *winds*, as the cause of storms, are symbols of wars and great commotions. Thus a wind is used in Jer. li. 1; iv. 11, 12, to express *destruction*; and in ch. xlix. 36, the four winds, a *general* destruction.* “And upon Elam will I bring the four winds from the four quarters of heaven, and I will scatter them towards all those winds; and there shall be no nation whither the outcasts of Elam shall not come.” To hold therefore the winds that they should not blow, is a very striking emblem of peace and tranquillity from war; and indeed much more so by the command that is given, that until a certain work is performed, nothing is to be injured by them, neither “the earth, nor the sea, nor any tree;”—that is, neither the peaceable and quiet part of the empire—neither the restless and agitated part of the community—nor any of the higher powers. This latter meaning of the symbol of a tree is beautifully used by Gibbon in the following passage: speaking of the estates of the great feudal lords being dissipated, and their race often extinguished in the costly and perilous expeditions of the Crusades, he says, “The conflagration which destroyed the tall and barren *trees* of the forest, gave air and scope to the vegetation of the smaller and nutritive plants of the soil.”†

Accordingly, after the conclusion of the war caused

* See Diss. p. 205.

† Gibbon, ch. lxi.

by the French Revolution, such a period of peace and stillness did, in a most unprecedented manner, take place—after the year 1815, every wind and sound of war was hushed—and YET CONTINUES! This is the exact point of time in which we are, and for the last five-and-twenty years have been, living;* and one which will not, cannot, at least if the present interpretation be correct, be interrupted, till the event here reserved has transpired. The rumours and apprehensions of war have, at various intervals, been repeated and loud, during the five-and-twenty years of peace, both in Poland, Belgium, Spain, Egypt, and now in France; but they have all, in a strange and unexpected way, in a way in which the hand of God has been very apparent, with as it were a “loud voice,” been hushed to silence! The winds, in obedience to the high command of God, were not to blow, and they accordingly have not been permitted to blow—and yet for a short season the restraint must continue!

2. The next thing very apparent from these verses is, that although there was to exist the present season of tranquillity, yet that it is only for an appointed time, and that it is to be followed by the most tremendous and fatal wars and invasions.

The command given to hold the four winds till the servants of God are sealed, is as much as to say, that when that sealing shall have taken place, the hold will be withdrawn, and the four winds will blow.

* Diss. p. 330.

In plain language it is as much as to say, that universal destruction is destined to fall upon the apostate, persecuting, infidel church (if indeed such anomaly can be used); but although this will not happen till the servants of God are sealed for deliverance from its fury, yet that this is the only stay or hindrance!

Here therefore, by the mere force of events alone, without any chronology whatever, we are brought to the immediate expectation, in perfect harmony of time, of the same days of vengeance as are prophesied in the predictions of the Old Testament. And from the present warlike aspect of the nations, from the new generation that in this time of peace has sprung up, and from the signs of the times as brought forward in the last chapter of my Dissertation, there appears every thing that can be required to confirm the year to which the various lines of the Old Testament chronological prophecy have pointed—that of 1844!

I would particularly refer to what was said in explanation of the latter part of the eleventh of Daniel, in which it is pointed out, that the career of Napoleon, described in vers. 36—39, and which of course is only a different relation of the events of the sixth seal, are followed by a state of quiescence, such as that above described, until “the time of the end” arrives;* and that then the king of the North shall come like a whirlwind,† (the tempestuous rushing of the four winds!) “with chariots and with horses,

* Diss. ch. xii. p. 330.

† Idem, ch. xiii. 349—352.

and with many ships; and shall enter into the countries, and overflow and pass over.”

3. The third thing that is apparent from the verses above quoted is, that from this ruin and its consequent miseries, come when they may, the servants of God will be delivered !

These servants of God are described, in ch. xiv. vers. 4, 5, to be “ they who have not been defiled with women,” (that is, not with an apostate church,) “ for they are virgins ; they are those who follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth . . . And in their mouth was found no guile : for they are without fault before the throne of God.” All such as answer to this description—and it is an awakening truth, to reflect that *all* such are living at the present moment—it is said before the day of wrath arrives shall be SEALED UPON THEIR FOREHEADS ! For this purpose an angel is seen ascending from the east or sun-rising, the most important and favoured point, having *the seal of the Living God* ! This must signify some agency that will be used as a mark of appropriation, whereby the Living God will own his servants to the view of all—for the forehead is the most prominent part of the human face, and can be seen by all.

It was noticed, in commenting upon Daniel xii. 10, “ Many shall be purified, made white, and tried ;” that immediately before “ the time of the end,” there would be a great persecution, which these words imply. Is this then *the seal* which God hath appointed to set a mark upon his servants ? It most assuredly signifies some act by which they shall be

discriminated from the great mass of religious professors. It should therefore be a serious consideration with all of us, Am I a servant of the Living God? and, Will His seal be set upon me? for it is the next, the very next event that is to happen; and from every view we can take of the subject, an event very soon to happen! The Apostle goes on to say—

“And I heard the number of them that were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel. Of the tribes of Juda were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nephthalim were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Zabulon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand.” (vii. 4—8.)

This is, upon the very face of it, a symbolical number, and a symbolical representation; and it carries its own meaning along with it: for if it be the servants of the God of the Angels, (“until,” he said, “*we* have sealed the servants of *our* God,” by which it appears, that more angels than one are employed on this happy business, and that they are real angels)—if, I say, it be the servants of God that are to be sealed, then they and the hundred and forty and four thousand, who are described as sealed, must be one and the same, those who are not defiled with

false doctrines or worship ; who follow Christ whithersoever he goeth ; and who are in his righteousness without fault. It follows, therefore, that the mention of the twelve tribes of Israel must be for the purpose of symbolizing the Christian church ; this being in accordance, as before observed, with all other symbols that have reference to Christian worship ; all, as far as the case will admit, being thus taken from what was connected with the Jewish dispensation.

The number twelve, added to the highest numerical used in the Scriptures, and applied to each tribe, shows its completeness—that not one shall be wanting—that not only shall there be the complete number of *twelve* tribes, but that of each tribe shall be *twelve* thousand.

At the same time, it is an appalling fact, that although it is a complete number, it is not *the* complete number ; for one tribe, that of Dan, who in the order of encampment occupies so conspicuous a place, is *totally omitted* ! and that of Manasseh introduced in its place. It must be designed, and it must be deeply significant. If the allusion refer to any one sect or denomination calling itself Christian, that shall be thus excluded, it must be one in which the essentials of godliness are not found, and the individuals of which do not “ follow *the Lamb* whithersoever he goeth.”

From all this it necessarily follows, that this expressive symbolical number thus constituted, must take in every servant of God throughout the whole world ; otherwise the symbol would fail of its com-

pleteness. This being the case, a number, (of the extent of which we can form no idea, since it would be difficult to name any part of the world where the Gospel, in one shape or other, has not reached ; and “ his Word,” the Lord hath declared, “ shall not return unto him void,”) must be included in this hundred and forty-four thousand, who are sealed for perservation and security.

The question now starts, HOW are they to be preserved ? In what is this security to consist ? We are quite sure of this, that from the solemnity of the whole scene it will be a complete and perfect preservation. But if the ruin from which they are saved is to be so annihilating as it is every where represented, where on earth can we imagine a place of safety suitable to the high dignity of having the seal of the living God fixed upon them for deliverance ? It may well be asked, Have we no intimation whatever given respecting it ? Are we left totally in the dark on this most interesting of all subjects ?

I have just observed, that the completeness of the number saved is so perfect that it must include the whole church of Christ, the servants of God, in every part of the world, an innumerable company of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues. Let us then attend to the next verse, in which the Apostle tells us what he saw after he heard the number that was sealed. He begins by describing it as something most remarkable and surprising. He says :

“ After this ! beheld, and lo, a great multitude ! which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands ; and they cry with a loud voice, saying, The salvation be ascribed to our God who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.” (vii. 9, 10.)

I take it for granted that these words must be considered to have an immediate and direct connection with, and a reference to, what goes before ; otherwise it may well be asked, Why are they placed in this position ? Taken thus, and in their plain straight-forward meaning, they furnish a full, comprehensive, and satisfactory answer to the question above propounded, regarding the nature of the preservation for which the servants of God are sealed ; and furnish the next piece of information in the historical narrative for which the mind is prepared and expects. If it be, indeed, a different kind of preservation to what *we* might expect, or to what we might judge would be adopted, still we must remember that it is not our wisdom, but God’s, that is concerned in the matter ; and our only anxiety therefore should be to ascertain what He hath determined ; and each of us to say, with Mary of old, (and happy indeed it is for us that we may say it,) “ Be it unto me according to thy word.”

I will, *First*, observe, that the great multitude here spoken of is beheld by the Apostle, not in any place on the earth, or in connection with kings, warriors, or any other of the inhabitants of the earth ; but they are beheld in the Heaven where God

reigns ; they are beheld “standing before the throne of God and the Lamb.” They are beheld with the insignia of perfect purity and of victory—with “white robes and palms in their hands,” a state compatible only with Heaven : and they are surrounded by, and in the presence of, “all the angels that stand round about the throne ;” and by the elders, the spirits of just men made perfect ; and by the four living creatures, or the general assembly of the church of the first-born, which are written in Heaven.

Secondly. I would observe, that this great multitude is evidently a newly arrived company.

1. This is very apparent from the surprise the apostle expressed on beholding it. “After this,” he says, “I beheld, and lo !”—language which could not have been used, had that multitude been there before.

2. From the individuals of it forming no part of the previous inhabitants of Heaven—for these have been fully described in Chapters Fourth and Fifth, as consisting only of God the Triune Jehovah, of the elders and four living creatures, and of the angels ; which are, in verse 11th, each and separately brought forward, *independent* of this great multitude. The latter, therefore, could not form a part of any of the former, but must constitute a separate class of themselves.

3. The question asked, in verse 13, supposes the same thing : “These, clothed in white robes, who are they, and whence came they ?”

This is then the first thing I would establish—viz.

that this great multitude, seen by the apostle immediately after the servants of God are sealed, and immediately before the four winds of heaven are loosened, is a company newly arrived in Heaven, of a class totally separate and distinct from any of its former inhabitants: not the elders, or those who have been raised from the dead—not the four living creatures, or the spirits of the unrisen dead—neither are they the angels!

“And they cry with a loud voice, saying, The salvation be ascribed to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb!” (verse 10.)

Thirdly. From these words I would observe that this newly-arrived company, this great multitude from all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, have just experienced, through the favour of God and the Lamb, a GREAT SALVATION! a salvation responded to in the warmest terms by the other inhabitants of Heaven, as appears by the following verses:—

“And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders, and the four living creatures, and fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, saying, AMEN: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever, Amen.” (vers. 11, 12.)

It is observable that here is no mention of “The salvation”—this is exclusively confined to the newly-arrived company mentioned in the 9th verse; and therefore by them alone it has been experienced. And it is not, as in our translation, merely “salvation,” omitting the definite article by which the

point and immediate application is lost; but it is THE salvation: some particular great deliverance is referred to, which “with a loud voice they ascribe to God and the Lamb!” And this alone is the burden of their song:—they are so overpowered by the mercy and love that have been shewn to them—they are so alive to the tremendous evils from which they have been delivered; and they are so sensible that all is the result of sovereign and triumphant grace; that, “as with the voice of many waters, and as the voice of loud thunder, and as harpers playing with their harps, they sang—they sang as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one was able to learn that song, except the hundred and forty and four thousand which were REDEEMED FROM THE EARTH.”* And that new song, which no one was able to learn, was, “THE SALVATION BE ASCRIBED TO OUR GOD, WHICH SITTETH UPON THE THRONE, AND TO THE LAMB!”

“And one of the elders spake, saying unto me, Who are these that are arrayed in white robes, and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said unto me, These are they which are come out of THE GREAT TRIBULATION, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” (vers. 13, 14.)

It is a remarkable peculiarity in prophetic history, that when the most important feature of a prophecy is about to be revealed or disclosed, it

* Rev. xiv. 2, 3.

is frequently thrown in the form of question and answer. Several of such have been noticed in the Old Testament prophecies. For instance, in Dan. viii. 13: "Then I heard one saint speaking, and another saint said unto that certain saint which spake, How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice?" &c.* Again, in Dan. xii. 5, 6: "Then I Daniel looked, and behold there stood other two, the one on this side the bank of the river, and the other on that side the bank of the river. And one said to the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, How long shall it be to the end of these wonders.'"†

Our attention being thus called, in a similar way, in the present instance, to the climax of the prophecy; and arrested by the anticipation of a question which we ourselves should naturally put—"These that are arrayed in white robes, who are they, and whence came they?" This newly-arrived great multitude, standing before the throne of God, and before the Lamb!—our curiosity is excited in the highest degree to know who they are? What follows shows that the question was put to the Apostle by one of the elders, for the purpose of giving him a reply, and that reply was—and it forms the

Fourth observation I would make respecting this surprising multitude,—“These are they,” said he, “that came out of the great tribulation;” or more intensely, according to the original Greek, “the Tri-

* Diss. ch. xi. pp. 294—297.

† Ibid. ch. xiv. pp. 375, 376.

bulation, the great one ;” for although, in our translation, there is *no* article, yet there is in reality a double one : it is emphatically “ the Tribulation, the great one,” from which this innumerable company have come.

“ Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple : and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters : and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.” (ver. 15—17.)

From these expressions of condolence and compassionate love, we infer, that in the great tribulation, through which this redeemed company have passed, they *have* hungered, and they *have* thirsted ; that the sun, or the ruling powers of the world, *has* scorched or bitterly oppressed them ; and that their eyes have been wet with tears. And we further infer, that the deliverance they have experienced is ETERNAL—they shall suffer the evils they have gone through “ *no more.*”

Fifthly. These observations seem sufficient to prove that the great multitude, described in verse 9, and the sealed number of one hundred and forty and four thousand, described in the preceding verses, must be *one and the same*. This being the case, it appears necessarily to follow, that as the one is described before the Throne of God, the deliverance

experienced must be a TRANSLATION TO HEAVEN. I know indeed of no commentator who has even hinted at such a thing, except Dean Woodhouse, as this whole chapter is generally explained away without any particular application. The Dean makes the following casual observation, but, as if he were afraid to pursue the idea, there leaves it : “ Of the manner in which the sealed of God shall be delivered in that day, we can speak no farther than the assurances of other passages of Scripture seem to warrant. Saint Paul assures us, that, in the great day of the Lord, the pious Christians then alive shall be caught up to the Lord * by a glorious deliverance ; which seems to accord with that described in the prophecy now before us.

(1) That this reasoning is correct, might be inferred, because the description both of the sealed company, and that before the throne, must necessarily consist of persons from “ all nations, kindreds, people, and tongues,” as has been already explained ; and as one in the regular order of narrative immediately follows the other, and both have a direct reference to that which causes the suspension of God’s judgments, there appears no alternative but to consider them the same. In fact, it might be asked, what other can they be ?

(2) The two companies appear to be unquestionably the same, from the circumstance of the first-mentioned being said to be sealed for deliverance

* 1 Thess. iv. 7.

from a great catastrophe that was coming upon the earth; and the second being introduced as celebrating with loud voice a great deliverance wrought for them, by him whose seal the hundred and forty-four thousand are said to have impressed upon their foreheads! The events, therefore, must have relation to one and the same multitude in regular consecutive order.

(3.) Because the act of sealing the servants of God, appears to have reference, as above explained,* to the effect of that persecution which Daniel describes is to happen at this time, in which “many shall be purified, and made white, and tried:” it is likewise the same point of time, when it is moreover said “the wicked shall do wickedly,” the latter causing the former. And such a state, it is directly expressed, the great multitude before the throne of God and the Lamb have just passed through, calling it a very great tribulation.

These considerations appear sufficient to set the question at rest, that the deliverance spoken of must be, as I have above expressed, *a translation to heaven!* But we are not left to mere conjecture, or even to extreme probabilities, or to the requirements of regular connected historic narrative. The question admits of a certain reply, which,

(4.) Is to be found in the after-mention of this hundred and forty-four thousand, exactly in the same order, as to time and circumstances, but brought

* See page 98.

forward in another line of prophecy. This is to be found in chapter xiv., which, in connection with chap. vii., may be read as follows :—"After the commotions and wars of the French revolution had ceased, I saw the final exterminating wars suspended, until the servants of God were sealed in their foreheads. The numbers sealed I heard described under the symbol of one hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of Israel. And I looked, and lo ! the Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with him an hundred and forty and four thousand, having his name, and the name of his Father, *written upon their foreheads*. And they sang, as it were, a new song BEFORE THE THRONE, and before the four living creatures, and the elders." But there still remains, as an additional confirmation, one other remarkable expression—"and no one was able to learn the song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, *which were redeemed FROM THE EARTH*," not from the grave ! And the expression is again more fully repeated in the next verse :* "These were redeemed *from among MEN*, being the first-fruits to God and the Lamb !"

Nothing can more clearly identify the sealed number with those before the throne, than these words ; and it does not appear possible to accommodate any event to meet the requirements of the true church being found in such a state and place, and in such honour, *redeemed from the earth—redeemed from*

* Rev. xiv. 4, 5.

amongst men ; but by the admission of a translation direct from earth to heaven. It is an event which our Saviour himself leads us to expect will some time or other happen, when he says, “ And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”* “ Then shall two be in the field, the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill ; the one shall be taken, and the other left.”†

And looking at the nature of the judgments from which the righteous, by this superlatively glorious interposition, are to be rescued ; remembering that they are described in language conveying ideas of the most complete and perfect destruction, attended with the most unmitigated horrors of war and blood and national ruin, it seems impossible to imagine any mode of safety than what is miraculous.

It appears to me that the feeling of every right-minded Christian on the subject ought to be this ; that seeing God so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son to bleed and to die for us ; seeing the subjects of his grace are so precious in his sight as he hath declared they are ; remembering what he has done, and what he has said he will do, for their sakes, and the honour which is assuredly laid up for them, and which they all allow and expect ; that there is nothing here predicted which ought or need to be incredible, nothing but what, supported

* Matt. xxiv. 31.

† Ver. 40, 41.

by such evidence, they may well believe ;—for, after all, however startling at the first sight it may appear—however contrary to our previously conceived ideas—there is really nothing but what is analogous to God’s former proceedings.

Every believer believes, or professes to believe, that his soul shall be conveyed to heaven on its dismissal from the body ; and what, if God wills, on closing the present dispensation, that He will magnify his own grace in doing a new thing in the sight of an apostate and persecuting world, and indeed a world which up to that moment has bitterly persecuted his servants ?—what, if He wills to shew their value in his sight, by sending, as in the case of Elijah, chariots of fire and horses of fire to convey them to heaven—what is there in all this incompatible with their high calling ? what is there to which they need object ? The real difference consists only in the method of conveyance. The end that awaits all believers is substantially the same, whether they pass through the territories of the grave, or are caught up to meet the Lord in the air. May each soul, therefore, say, “ Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief.”

THE OPENING OF THE SEVENTH SEAL ;

Or a Solemn Pause.

“ And when he opened the Seventh Seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.” (viii. 1.)

In reflecting upon the contents of this seal, or the

seventh opened roll, or volume, or book, which, compared with the six former ones, is a very small one, we must recollect where the last, or sixth seal, as above described, left us. It left us with the church translated to heaven before the throne of God, as a deliverance from the overwhelming misery and ruin that were coming upon the world. The opening of this seal, therefore, must be some new position or epoch in the empire, which we may suppose to arise from the most fearful apprehensions of the coming vengeance and ruin,—an epoch which will be characterized by an entire cessation from action, for this the word “silence,” used as a symbol, signifies—a cessation something like what we should designate a state of paralysis—an awful pause in the immediate and certain prospect of utter and overwhelming ruin. It will be a pause, a solemn pause—the nations awaiting in anxious and tremulous suspense the blow that is to cause their extinction, the extinction of the ten-kingdomed Roman empire—and with that, that of the great image of Daniel, the last of the Gentile monarchies of the world!

The “Seals” therefore, or any act or new order of things having the seals of empire, must, with this act of “silence,” be closed for ever; and another series of events which we shall now proceed to trace from its beginning, and bring up to this point of time, will carry on the short remainder of the history to millennial blessedness, or the establishment of the kingdom of Christ.

I would conclude this part of the Book of the Revelation with one or two general observations.

1. How near and intimate the heavenly world has been brought to our view and recognition !

2. How intimately the church in heaven appears to be acquainted with the concerns of the church on earth !

This appears from the Apostle having been summoned by the whole body of the general assembly and church of the first-born in heaven, to “come and see;” by the martyrs under the fifth seal knowing that vengeance was delayed ; and by one of the “elders” giving the information respecting the newly-arrived translated company before the throne ! The parts assigned to such characters seem to be most inappropriate, if we suppose them ignorant of what was passing in the world.

3. I would again repeat, that we are brought, by this series of events here detailed, to the near prospect of a great persecution, and to an immediate subsequent national ruin, *without the assistance of any prophetical* CHRONOLOGY. The very general objection therefore, which on this score is made to the study of this subject, does not apply here, any more than in the historical narrative of Daniel’s last vision, in the latter part of his eleventh chapter.* From both, we perceive that a certain period of quietness is to be enjoyed, after the commotions, wars, and changes occasioned by the

* Diss. ch. xiii. p. 344.

French Revolution, previous to their renewal in the most dreadful forms, which period of peace has already run on for five-and-twenty years. It does not appear, from the aspect of things, that it can last much longer ; and therefore, as far as this consideration can give them weight, so far the chronological conclusions of my former work are strengthened and confirmed. But much greater proof awaits us, as we shall proceed with the explanation of the other lines of this prophecy ; and with those other clearer and more distinct signs of the times, with which they abound, as they draw near to their termination.

CHAPTER VII.

THE JUDGMENTS OF GOD UPON THE ROMAN EMPIRE;

PARTICULARLY

UPON THE WESTERN EMPIRE,

BY THE

TERRIBLE INVASIONS OF THE GOTHs, VANDALS,
HUNS, AND OTHER BARBARIANS.

THE FOUR FIRST TRUMPETS.

New Series of Events—Judgments for Sin—Explanation of the Master Symbol—Prayers of the Righteous heard—Infliction of horrid Wars—Connection of the first four Trumpets—They are all Symbolical—The third part, meaning of—Barbarous Nations—Destruction they caused—Unanimity of Commentators respecting the Interpretation of the Trumpets—First Trumpet, the Invasions of Alaric king of the Goths, and others—Second Trumpet, those of Attila king of the Huns—Third Trumpet, the devastation of Genseric king of the Vandals—Fourth Trumpet, the extinction of the Imperial authority in the West.

CHAPTER VII.

THE JUDGMENTS OF GOD UPON THE
WESTERN EMPIRE,

BY THE

GOTHS, VANDALS, AND OTHER BARBARIANS.

HAVING contemplated the history of the church, and the church's enemies, to the extent which the series of events symbolized by the seven seals can carry us; and having shewn that the seven epochas thus signified, give a faithful picture of the colour and complexion of the scenes it has exhibited, as far as *its own volutions and acts have brought them to pass*: we now proceed to a different series of events, brought about by extrinsic causes, and by enemies to the empire. And it deserves to be particularly noticed, in what a very great degree the confused mass of events of regular history is brought to order and simplicity by this arrangement—that is, by keeping the different classes of events, thus distinct and separate, and particularly when this is done, as in the present instance, by a wisdom that cannot err.

In the series which has already passed before us,

we have seen a mournful spectacle of unparalleled backsliding, an utter perversion of the truth, and a rank corruption in morals, presented throughout the whole surface of society. We now come to another portion of history connected with "the fates and fortunes" of the church, where we shall behold the natural consequence of such an awful departure from the truth, and such abounding wickedness. And it is another lesson, if we would but attend to it, written in the largest characters, that sin and a rejection of God's most blessed Gospel, is, and that in the most intense sense, followed by punishment in nations as well as in individuals. God, as the righteous governor of the universe, has ever displayed the unutterable holiness of his character, and his hatred to sin by this course of procedure. We see it in the judgment of the Deluge, in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, in the judgments upon Israel and Judah; but we especially see it in the infliction of Divine wrath upon the Son of God for the sins of others. "He spared not," also, "the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them unto chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment."*

We have now to contemplate, in the new class of events before us, the predicted vengeance on the fearful backsliding, apostacy, and persecutions that have been detailed in the events of the seven seals. These are likewise divided into seven parts, or a

* 2 Peter ii. 4.

full and perfect number; and the dreadful history is thus introduced to our notice :—

“ And I saw the seven angels who stood before God, and to them were given seven trumpets. And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer with the prayer of all saints upon the golden altar, which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense ascended with the prayers of the saints, from the hand of the angel before God. And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire from the altar, and cast it to the earth; and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake.” (Rev. viii. 2—5.)

With respect to this introduction, I would first draw attention to the master-symbol here employed—it is expressive of war. When the host of Israel was to go forth to battle, the TRUMPET was to give the signal, and sound the alarm.* It was likewise the fearful signal of hostile invasion: and in this sense we are here to understand it; “ Shall the trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? ”† The nature of the events, signified by the sounding of the seven trumpets, may therefore be summed up in the following particulars :—

1st. They have been produced, not by means of internal wars, nor by any means which had, like the former series of events, the seals of empire, but by the instrumentality of barbarous nations situated beyond the bounds of the Roman earth.

2d. They have been caused by great external violence, in the way of invasions, rapid conquests, and complete overthrows.

* Numb. x. 5.

† Amos iii. 6; Jer. iv. 19.

3d. They have uniformly been characterized by the very worst evils attendant on war; such as indiscriminate slaughter, rapine, devastation, and ruin.

In the second place, I would observe, that in this introduction there is an assurance given to the “saints,” that their prayers shall be accepted, and that they shall be taken care of during the continuance of these horrible catastrophes. The altar before which the angel stood was “the golden altar before the throne,” which stood before the mercy-seat, and upon which was to be offered no strange incense;* no strange fire;† by no strange priest:‡ but incense, offered thereon by the legal priests, was an atonement for the people,§ who accompanied this offering with their prayers.¶ It is therefore beautifully symbolical of the efficacy and acceptance of the prayers offered in these hours of danger; and as *we* stand upon the verge of the last, the greatest, the consummating of these stupendous inflictions of Divine wrath, it affords one of the greatest encouragements to us to pray much, and to pray fervently, and to sigh, and without ceasing to cry for the abominations of the land.

Thirdly. After “the smoke of the incense had ascended with the prayers of the saints, from the hand of the angel before God,” the angel took the censer, and filled it with FIRE. In Psalm

* Ex. xxx. 9, 38.

† Lev. x. 1.

‡ Num. xvi.

§ Num. xvi. 46.

¶ Luke i. 10.

xviii. 8, the wrath of God is compared to fire ; and the effects of his wrath, which are war, famine, and other scourges, are described under the same simile.* And thus it is explained by Sir Isaac Newton, who says, “ burning any thing with fire is put for the consuming thereof by war.”† Such a fire was cast upon “ the earth,” the Roman world, the territorial platform of prophecy ; “ and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings,” wars and hostile invasions ; “ and an earthquake,” or a complete overturning of the established order of things. So complete indeed was the change effected by the first four trumpets alone, that new forms of government, new manners, new laws, new dresses, new languages, new names of men and countries, were every where throughout the Western empire introduced ; while the ancient inhabitants, including all the proud and illustrious families, whose names are so conspicuous in ancient history, were almost, and for any thing we know to the contrary, entirely exterminated.

“ And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound. (ver. 6.)

FIRST TRUMPET.

“ And the first angel sounded, and there were hail and fire mingled with blood ; and they were cast upon the earth : and the third part of the earth was burnt up ; and a third part of the trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.”

SECOND TRUMPET.

“ And the second angel sounded ; and, as it were, a great

* Ps. lxvi. 12 ; Jer. xlviii. 45.

† Obs. on the Prop. p. 18.

mountain, burning with fire was cast into the sea : and the third part of the sea became blood ; and the third part of the creatures in the sea, having life, died ; and the third part of the ships was destroyed."

THIRD TRUMPET.

" And the third angel sounded ; and there fell from heaven a great star, burning like a lamp ; and it fell upon the third part of the rivers and fountains of waters. And the name of the star is called the Wormwood : and the third part of the waters became wormwood ; and many of the men died of the waters because they were bitter."

FOURTH TRUMPET.

" And the fourth angel sounded ; and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars ; so that a third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for the third part of it, and the night likewise."

(ch. viii. 7—12.)

I quite agree with Dean Woodhouse that these four trumpets seem to have a *general* character. "The attack, whose alarm is sounded, falls in a four-fold division,—first, on the land ; for thus it seems to me," he observes, " that the original word should be translated, not in its general signification of the *earth*, as containing the land, sea, rivers, &c. ; but in its particular sense, as *opposed* to the *sea*, &c. : secondly, on the sea : thirdly, on the rivers and springs : fourthly, on the *heavenly* luminaries—the sun, moon, and stars ; that is, on the whole of God's creation. For in the fourteenth chapter of this book, verse the seventh, God is described as the Creator of all things under these divisions : " the heaven ; the earth ; and the sea ; and the springs of waters."

The same division of the visible world, (three of them often, sometimes four) are to be seen in other passages of Scripture.*

It must not be forgotten that these four distinct natural parts of the empire are placed here as *symbols*. It would be a violation of every principle of consistency to suppose them otherwise; as well as an involution of the whole subject in a labyrinth of difficulties and ludicrousness. They have, like all the other symbols of this book, a reference to men, not to things; and, I consider, signify as follows: *the land*—persons in a state of peace and quietness, under the authority of laws and a settled government, where all is stable and firm: *the sea*—a state, on the other hand, where persons are, from one cause or other, loosened from such restraints; and all is an unsettled state of anarchy and confusion: *rivers and fountains of waters*—the channels and sources of its supplies, support, and strength: and *the heavenly luminaries*—the king or emperor; his court and subjects; and the nobility and persons in high and responsible stations.

The next observation I have to make, is with regard to the third part, so frequently mentioned in these four trumpets, and to explain that it here refers altogether to the WESTERN part of the empire; as being that of the greatest extent, that of which the city of Rome itself was the capital, and that

* See Is. li. 15, 16; Hosea iv. 3; Nahum i. 4, 5; Hab. ii, 6, 8, 11; Zech. i. 3; Hagg. ii. 6; Phil. ii. 10.

which alone answers to the symbols. The other two portions of it were that of the East, of which Constantinople, called by many “New Rome,” was the capital; and that of the South, of which the metropolis was Carthage, called by contemporary writers “the Rome of the African world.” This was the most remarkable and eminent division of the universal and extensive Roman empire, and one that was recognized even in St. John’s days. The East and the West are indeed alone prominent in history, and therefore in prophecy; because they only of the three, had the halo and magnificence of a court thrown around them, in consequence of each being, in general, the residence of an emperor. It is evident, therefore, that in the prediction of these heavy judgments, the limitation that we here find was absolutely required; and it is another instance of the precision with which prophecy is given. For instance, in the first trumpet, whilst it is said that only one third of the earth was burnt up, and one third of the trees, it is added that “ALL green grass was burnt up;” thereby signifying, that although only one third part of the empire was thrown into a state of irremediable confusion, and in which persons of superior distinction lost their all; yet that throughout the *whole* empire its beauty and glory were defaced. It no longer looked lovely to the eye of the mind, like the green grass to the natural eye; but from henceforth became, in all its length and breadth—for there was scarcely any place where the feet of the barbarian armies had not trod—parched and barren. Its

majesty and greatness, in all their ramifications, were irrecoverably gone !

The instruments which God made use of on these occasions, to effect his purposes of vengeance, were prodigious swarms of barbarians, situated beyond the boundaries of the empire, in the then unknown regions of the North—those countries in fact now occupied by the Danes, Swedes, Saxons, Germans, Poles, Russians, and Tartars. The savages with which they at that time swarmed, are known in history under the various names of Goths, Visigoths, Ostrogoths, Huns, Vandals, Suevi, and others less celebrated. These, in almost apparently endless hordes, immediately after the death of the great Theodosius, A.D. 395, successively pressed upon the Empire with accelerated impetuosity ; and, in less than two centuries, brought about all the miseries and ruin described in these four trumpets.

The celebrated historian, Dr. Robertson, thus draws their character. “ Wherever they marched their rout was marked with blood. They ravaged or destroyed all around them. They made no distinction between what was sacred and what was profane. They respected no age, nor sex, nor rank. What escaped the fury of the first inundation, perished in those that followed it. The most fertile and populous provinces were converted into deserts, in which were scattered the ruins of villages and cities, that afforded shelter to a few miserable inhabitants, whom chance had preserved, or the sword of the enemy, wearied with destroying, had spared. The con-

querors who first settled in the countries which they had wasted, were expelled or exterminated by new invaders, who, coming from regions farther removed from the civilized parts of the world, were still more fierce and rapacious. This brought fresh calamities upon mankind, which did not cease until the North, by pouring forth successive swarms, was drained of people, and could no longer furnish instruments of destruction. Famine and pestilence, which always march in the train of war, when it ravages with such inconsiderate cruelty, raged in every part of Europe, and completed its sufferings. If a man were called to fix upon a period in the history of the world, during which the condition of the human race were most calamitous and afflicted, he would, without hesitation, name that which elapsed from the death of Theodosius the Great, to the establishment of the Lombards in Italy. The contemporary authors, who beheld that scene of desolation and labour, are at a loss to describe the horror of it. *The scourge of God—the destroyer of nations*—are the dreadful epithets by which they distinguish the most noted of the barbarian leaders; and they compare the ruin which they brought on the world, to the havoc occasioned by earthquakes, conflagrations, or deluges,—the most formidable and fatal calamities which the imagination of man can conceive.”

The above concluding observation, which, it will be perceived, was made without any reference to Scripture symbols, is very striking, when viewed in connexion with those we are considering—an earth-

quake being mentioned in ver. 5 ; a storm or deluge of hail and fire in ver. 7 ; a burning mountain in ver. 8 ; and a fiery meteor in ver. 10.

These terrific images indeed so naturally apply to events of this description, that less difference of opinion has, in consequence, been found to exist amongst commentators on this part of the apocalypse than any other : and the names of Brightman, Mede, Poole, Jurieu, Godwin, Fleming, Whiston, Sir Isaac Newton, Daubuz, Lowman, Bishop Newton, Faber, Frere, Fry, Scott, Jones, Cuninghame, and others, may be adduced, as all applying them, with no essential difference of opinion, to those calamities which brought about the fall of the Western Empire.

I will now proceed very briefly to notice those events of this character which most distinctly and most prominently bear upon, and agree with, the four first trumpets above quoted.

FIRST. Although for half a century before the time of Theodosius, even in the reign of Constantine, the empire had been seriously threatened by the Goths, it was not until that of the Emperor Valens that they were admitted within its bounds. From henceforward they had been kept in a state of subjection by the firm and temperate character, and by the warlike abilities, of Theodosius, on whose single life the safety of the tottering state seemed to depend. No sooner therefore was this great prince laid in his grave, than in A.D. 396, the first irruption

of these Northern barbarians took place, and the irreparable work of destruction seriously commenced. “The savage warriors of Scythia issued from their forests, directed by the bold and artful genius of ALARIC, a name dreadfully pre-eminent in these scenes of destruction ; and crossing the Danube near its mouth, pursued with almost unvaried success, for sixteen or seventeen years, their desolating course.” The whole territory of Attica—“Corinth, Argos, and Sparta—yielded without resistance to the arms of the Goths ; their villages and cities were burnt, their males massacred, and their beautiful females driven away like cattle.” This route, it may be interesting to the Christian reader to notice, took in the cities of Thessalonica, Phillippi, Berea, Athens, and other places mentioned in the New Testament.

At length, after devastating the shores of Pannonia, Istria, and Venice, the tremendous sound of the Gothic trumpet was heard under the walls of Rome, which, after a third siege, and eleven hundred and sixty-three years from the time of its foundation, was taken ! So cruel a slaughter was made of the inhabitants, that it is said the streets of the city were filled with the dead bodies, which remained for a long time unburied. “The despair of the citizens was sometimes converted into fury ; and whenever the barbarians were provoked by opposition, they extended the promiscuous massacre to the feeble, the innocent, and the helpless.” This was attended with a general pillage of its immense treasures, the spoils

of the world ; and the most horrid cruelties were committed to discover and obtain them. At the end of six days the city was evacuated, when the lawless savages pursued their route into the Southern provinces of Italy, where Alaric, after destroying whatever opposed his passage, ended his days A.D. 411 ; and his successor, making peace with the Emperor, passed over into Gaul.

Meanwhile, again from the cold regions of the North, another very numerous swarm of barbarians, under Rhadagast, burst upon the banks of the Upper Danube, and passing over into Italy, besieged Florence, and threatened Rome. Being stopped in this quarter, they crossed the Rhine, and entered Gaul, as France was then called ; and “ this memorable passage,” says Gibbon, “ may be considered as the fall of the Roman empire in the countries beyond the Alps ; and the barriers, which had so long separated the savage and civilized nations of the earth, may be considered from that fatal moment levelled with the ground. The banks of the Rhine were crowded, like those of the Tiber, with elegant houses and well-cultivated farms. This scene of peace and plenty was suddenly changed into a desert ; and the prospect of the smoking ruins could alone distinguish the solitude of nature from the desolations of man. The consuming flames of war spread from the banks of the Rhine over the greater part of the seventeen provinces of Gaul ! That rich and extensive country was delivered to the barbarians, who drove all before

them in one promiscuous crowd,—the bishop, the senator, and the virgin, laden with the spoil of their houses and altars.”

After spreading these dreadful ravages throughout that country, the Vandals and other tribes, in 409, entered Spain, which, in like manner, they overran, and ravaged. “At length, satiated with carnage and rapine, and afflicted by the contagious evils which they themselves had introduced, they fixed their permanent seats in the depopulated country.”

But this furious and destructive Northern hail-storm did not stop here. Having, as we have seen, ravaged the East and the West, it was, in order that no part of the Roman earth should escape its devastating influence, in the year 429 carried into the South. At that time, the Vandals, under the command of Genseric, crossed the Straits of Gibraltar, and invaded the African provinces, which were extremely populous: and the country itself so fruitful, that it deserved and attained the name of the granary of Rome and mankind. “On a sudden, the seven provinces, from Tangier to Tripoli, were overwhelmed by the invasion of the Vandals. War, in its fairest form, implies a perpetual violation of humanity and justice; and the hostilities of barbarians are inflamed by the fierce and lawless spirit which incessantly disturbs their peaceful and domestic society.

The Vandals, where they found resistance, seldom gave quarter: and the deaths of their valiant countrymen were expiated by the ruin of the cities under whose walls they had fallen. Careless of the distinc-

tions of age, or sex, or rank, they employed every species of indignity and torture, to force from the captives a discovery of their hidden wealth." * In A.D. 439, about ten years from the time of their first invasion of Africa, they surprised and took Carthage, its capital; where, after Genseric had permitted his licentious troops to satiate their rage and avarice, he introduced a more regular system of rapine and oppression, enjoining all persons, without fraud or delay, to deliver their gold, silver, jewels, and valuable furniture or apparel; and the attempt to secrete any part thereof, was inexorably punished with death or torture.

Thus completely did the storm of hail, and fire, and blood beat upon the *whole* Roman earth, whereby its beauty was throughout irreparably defaced: "ALL green grass was burnt up," East, West, and South. It was, nevertheless, but "a third part" that was parched by its continuance. The hail-stones formed a thick and permanent lodging in the Western empire only. From this portion of the figurative world they were never removed: and many ages of war and darkness followed, during which the fruits of peace, and science, and civilization were completely blasted and burnt up." †

History thus bears witness, that the effects of this first trumpet exactly accords with the prophecy. "The Roman earth," again to quote from Mr. Faber, "was dreadfully desolated in *all* its three divisions:

* Gibbon.

† Faber.

but while the Eastern empire recovered itself from the visitation, and while the Vandalic kingdom soon melted away in Africa, the Western empire," *one third part of the land, and one third part of the trees,* " was permanently occupied, and parcelled out into various sovereignties, by the victorious warriors of the north."

SECOND. Scarcely had the tempest of the first trumpet, after sweeping its most destructive course from one end of the empire to the other, spent itself in the extreme provinces of Africa, than the SECOND TRUMPET *sounded!* and a "great mountain burning with fire," in other words, a great and warlike nation, burning with hostile and sanguinary rage, was cast into it, unsettled and weakened as it was, and "it became blood!"

This great nation was the kingdom of the Huns, which, at the time it was now about to be brought into action, was under the sway of a sovereign, whose very name carried terror with it, and who was emphatically called, The scourge of God. "If a line of separation," says Gibbon, "were drawn between the civilized and the savage climate of the globe, ATTILA might aspire to the title of supreme and sole monarch of the barbarians. He alone, among the conquerors of ancient and modern times, united the two mighty kingdoms of Germany and Scythia; and those vague appellations, when they are applied to his reign, may be understood with an ample latitude. The crowd of vulgar kings, the leaders of so many martial

tribes, who served under the standard of Attila, were ranged in the submissive order of guards and domestics, round the person of their master. They watched his nod, they trembled at his frown; and at the first signal of his will they executed, without murmur or hesitation, his stern and absolute commands. In time of peace, the dependent princes, with their national troops, attended the royal camp in regular succession; but when Attila collected his military force, he was able to bring into the field an army of five, or, according to another account, of seven hundred thousand barbarians."

Such, according to the faithful voice of well-authenticated history, was the kingdom which, in pursuance to the high decree of Heaven, was about to be precipitated on the almost defenceless and yet bleeding empire. The fatal blast sounded in the year 441; and until the death of Attila in 453, for twelve years, the Western empire, the same "third part" that had so severely suffered before, again became drenched with blood. This third part of the subjects or inhabitants of the Roman jurisdiction "died," as to their ancient polity; and the "third part" of the *cities*—the emporiums of trade or commerce, as "ships" are to the literal sea—were destroyed. But the beauty and significance of the application of the symbols of this trumpet, admit still of a finer illustration. A burning mountain cast into the sea, whatever mischief it might do during the period it was on fire, would in time be extinguished. And this was the case, in a remarkable manner, with

the kingdom of the Huns. In the first place, Attila himself was suddenly and prematurely seized by the hand of death, as he was meditating an attack on Rome, from which purpose he had been diverted the previous year; and in the next place, the Huns, after the loss of their king, returned *without the bounds* of the empire; and unlike the other barbarous nations, although they had left such indelible traces of their inroads, never had a fixed settlement within it: it is the language of Gibbon, speaking of the fate of this people, “and finally extinguished the empire of the Huns.”

The track pursued by Attila will be best given in the language of the historian, who, after naming the defences of the Illyrian frontier, says, “But these obstacles were instantly swept away by the *inundation* of the Huns. They attacked with *fire and sword* the populous cities of Sirmium and Singidunum, of Retiaria and Marcianopolis, of Niassus and Sardica, where every circumstance, in the discipline of the people, and the construction of the buildings, had been gradually adapted to the sole purposes of defence. The whole breadth of Europe, as it extends above five hundred miles from the Euxine to the Adriatic, was at once invaded, and occupied, and desolated by the myriads of barbarians whom Attila led into the field. The armies of the Eastern empire were vanquished in three successive engagements: and the progress of Attila may be traced by the fields of battle. From the Hellespont to Thermopylæ, and

the suburbs of Constantinople, he ravaged without resistance, and without mercy, the provinces of Thrace and Macedonia. Heraclea and Hadrianople might, perhaps, escape this dreadful eruption of the Huns: but words expressive of the total extirpation or erasure, are applied to the calamities which they inflicted on seventy cities of the Eastern empire.—A pause at length seemed to take place: but it was a passing semblance, rather than a permanent reality. In the year 446, the Constantinopolitan emperor concluded an ignominious peace with Attila: but, in the year 450, the restless Hun threatened alike both the East and the West. Mankind awaited his decision with awful suspense.”—The fiery mountain was however now cast into Gaul and Italy. After ravaging the former of those countries with his usual savage barbarity, he was at length stopped in the plains of Chalons by a great defeat from the allied Roman armies, “*the last victory* which was achieved in the name of the Western empire.”

“Neither the spirit, nor the forces, nor the reputation of Attila, were impaired by the Gallic expedition. He passed the Alps, invaded Italy, and besieged Aquilea with an innumerable host of barbarians. The succeeding generation could scarcely discover its ruins. After this dreadful chastisement, Attila pursued his march; and, as he passed, the cities of Altinum, Concordia, and Padua, were reduced to heaps of stones and ashes. The inland towns, Vicenza, Verona, and Bergamo, were exposed to the rapacious cruelty of the

Huns. Milan and Pavia submitted without resistance to the loss of their wealth. Attila then spread his ravages over the rich plains of modern Lombardy ; which are divided by the Po, and bounded by the Alps and Appenines. It is a saying worthy of the ferocious pride of Attila, that the grass never grew where his horse had trod ! ”

THIRD. About two years after the death of Attila, and the evacuation of the Empire by the Huns, the third fatal blast sounded ! and the formidable GEN-
SERIC, king of the Vandals, a name already noticed under the first trumpet, and a name classed by Gibbon as of equal rank with that of Alaric and Attila in the destruction of the Western empire, fell as “ a great star burning as it were a lamp,” upon those parts that were the channels and sources of its supplies and riches, and made them very “ bitter.” These parts, as it regarded the present prosperity of the Empire, were those of a maritime nature, and the dominion of the seas.

Genseric made the first serious commencement with the city of Rome itself ; the pomp and luxury of which were, in the forty-five years that had elapsed since the Gothic invasion, in some measure restored. In the year 455, he sailed from the port of Carthage, and landed at the mouth of the Tiber ; and Rome, so lately the queen of nations, was now utterly defenceless, and unable to resist the arms of a barbaric leader. During fourteen days and nights this great metropolis of the world was given up to the ferocity

of the Vandals, and the licentiousness of the Moors ; and by these reckless hordes it was plundered of all that yet remained to it from former conquerors, of public or private wealth, of sacred or profane treasure. Among other spoils of the former kind, those which had been taken from the temple at Jerusalem, on its destruction by Titus nearly four hundred years before, were transferred, on this occasion, from Rome to Carthage. Having thus satiated at once his rapacity and his cruelty, the haughty Vandal hoisted sail, carrying with him immense treasures, and an innumerable multitude of captives, amongst whom were the empress Eudoxia, and her two daughters.

From this time, for many years onwards, the kingdom of Italy, a name to which the Western empire was gradually reduced, was afflicted and *embittered* by the incessant depredations of the Vandal pirates. “ In the spring of each year they equipped a formidable navy in the port of Carthage ; and Genseric himself, although in a very advanced age, still commanded in person the most important expeditions. His designs were concealed with impenetrable secrecy till the moment he hoisted sail. When he was asked by his pilot what course he should steer, ‘ Leave the determination to the winds (replied the barbarian with pious arrogance) ; *they* will transport us to the guilty coast whose inhabitants have provoked the Divine justice ;’ but if Genseric himself deigned to issue more precise orders, he judged the most wealthy to be the most criminal. The Vandals repeatedly visited the coasts

of Spain, Liguria, Tuscany, Campania, Lucania, Bruttium, Apulia, Calabria, Venetia, Dalmatia, Epirus, Greece, and Sicily: they were tempted to subdue the island of Sardinia, so advantageously placed in the centre of the Mediterranean; and their arms spread desolation or terror, from the columns of Hercules to the mouth of the Nile."

Thus, like a blazing meteor, did they fall upon the allegorical rivers and fountains of waters; "the celerity of their motions," adds the historian, "enabling them at the same time to threaten and to attack the most distant objects which attracted their desires; and as they always embarked a sufficient number of horses, they had no sooner landed than they swept the dismayed country with a body of light cavalry."

But this portentous star was only to make *one-third* of the waters thus become wormwood; and accordingly the unconscious testimony of the historian goes on to add, "the fury of the Vandals was confined to the LIMITS OF THE WESTERN EMPIRE!"* Genseric continued to be the tyrant of the sea, continuing his depredations for about the space of twenty years from the sack of Rome, and did not die until he had beheld the extinction of the empire of the West.

There is another and more emphatic sense in which he deserves the appellation of a star, or angel of a church,† inasmuch as he was the propagator and

* Gibbon.

† Rev. i. 20.

champion of the Arian heresy, and a ruler in ecclesiastical affairs wherever his conquests extended. In this respect his fiery and desolating course is, with strict regard to symbolical language, designated by the words "*burning as it were a lamp*;" for his name stands in dreadful pre-eminence, not merely as a destroyer of nations, but as a ruthless and savage persecutor of the Lord's people. Gibbon says, "The cruel and absurd enterprize of subduing the minds of a whole people, was undertaken by the Vandals alone. Genseric himself, in his early youth, had renounced the orthodox communion; and the apostate could neither grant nor expect a sincere forgiveness. He was exasperated to find that the African who had fled before him in the field, still presumed to dispute his will in the synods and churches; and his ferocious mind was incapable of fear, or of compassion. His Catholic subjects were oppressed by intolerant laws and arbitrary punishments. The language of Genseric was furious and formidable: the knowledge of his intentions might justify the most unfavourable interpretation of his actions: and the Arians were reproached with the frequent executions which stained the palace and dominions of the tyrant." The same historian immediately afterwards speaks of "the religious war," and says that "persecution was made the serious and important business of the Vandal court."

Acting on this principle, throughout all his extensive ravages, he not only spoiled private houses, palaces, and public buildings, but he stripped the

churches of their riches and ornaments; rased them in most instances to the ground; seized their revenues; sent their bishops into exile, or to the slaughter; and maimed, and otherwise tormented or slew, such as were nobly firm and inflexible in acknowledging the Deity of God their Saviour. Thus in every sense were “the waters made bitter, and many men died of the waters because they were made bitter.”

FOURTH. The deeply marked lines of desolation inflicted on the Empire by the three trumpets already considered, were of that destructive and permanent character, and they had so completely overthrown the vast colossal power of Rome in the West, that it required no *new* enemy from beyond the bounds of the Empire, no new fiery mountain or blazing star, to finish the work of desolation in the subversion of the imperial throne. “The remnant, or the refuse of previous invasions, was enough to destroy the last remaining parts of Roman greatness in Italy, and to abolish the office and the name of the Emperor of Rome.”

Accordingly, on the sounding of the FOURTH TRUMPET, Odoacer, king of the Heruli—a bold barbarian, and popular leader of the confederate troops of Italy, of whom no new symbol or similitude is given, as in the three former instances—in the year 476 stripped the emperor Augustulus of his imperial robes, and every shadow of Roman greatness in the West departed! In the space of twenty

years, nine emperors had successively disappeared : the present one was a youth only recommended by his beauty ; and would be “ the least entitled to the notice of posterity, if his reign, which was marked by that *extinction of the Roman empire in the West*, did not leave a MEMORABLE ERA IN THE HISTORY OF MANKIND.”* His real name was Romulus Augustus ; respecting which the same historian remarks, “ the appellations of two great founders of the city, and of the monarchy, were thus strangely united in the last of their successors.” Anticipating another similar fact which will shortly come under our notice, in speaking of the extinction of the Eastern empire, it may in like manner be remarked, that the last of the successors of Constantine,” the founder of the Eastern capital, likewise bore his name.

Thus was the third part of the sun, the ruling power, smitten ; likewise the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars ; and that to such a degree, as that neither the one nor the other could afford any light. In consequence of this eclipse, or obscuration, the Western empire was darkened for above three centuries, so that “ the day,” whose light is direct from the sun, “ shone not for a third part of it ; nor the night,” which receives its light from the other luminaries, the moon and the stars “ shone likewise.” One of the heads was, as it is elsewhere expressed, thus “ wounded to death,” and

* Gibbon.

did not revive until the commencement of the ninth century. In the mean time the evils and miseries of the Roman world arrived at that extreme pitch which is so eloquently described in the above quotation from Dr. Robertson ; and the West settled into a gloom of ignorance and barbarism.

CHAPTER VII.

THE
RESTORATION OF THE HOUSE OF
DAVID TO THE THRONE.

FROM THE DETHRONEMENT OF THE HOUSE OF DAVID
BY NEBUCHADNEZZAR, B. C. 602, OR 601, TO ITS
RESTORATION IN THE PERSON OF CHRIST AT THE
MILLENNIUM, A. D. 1918 OR 1919,—A PERIOD OF
2500 YEARS.

(Leviticus xxvi., as quoted in Chapter V.)

CHAPTER VII.

Distinction of the tribe of Judah—Grant of the sovereignty to the house of David—Characters of the kings of Judah—Jehoiakim, the last king—Difficulty of fixing correct epochas—Genealogy of Christ, the legal heir to the throne—What David understood by the terms of the above grant—The Annunciation—Other prophecies relating to Christ as heir to the throne—The incorruption of his body—His resurrection and ascension—His second coming—The throne of Israel and Judah again re-united—The reign of Christ—Nebuchadnezzar's vision of the great tree—The Millennium.

IF the chronological term of *seven times*, as it occurs in the twenty-sixth of Leviticus, and also as it is to be found in the fourth of Daniel, will bear the important signification which I have attached to it, there cannot be any doubt that its application ought not to be confined exclusively to the Ten Tribes; but that it must likewise have a *special* reference to the tribe and kingdom of Judah. Not but that it had an inchoate application to this tribe before; for in the same year that the kingdom of Israel was finally carried into captivity by Esarhaddon, the king of Judah was likewise taken captive and carried into Babylon. But the time was not arrived when the house of David was yet to be deprived of the throne; and therefore Manasseh, “when he was in affliction,

besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers: and prayed unto him, and he was intreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom," on the throne of which his posterity continued for about seventy-five years longer.

The tribe of Judah being that from which the Messiah was to spring, was on all occasions pre-eminently distinguished from all the other tribes. In the blessing which Jacob pronounced upon his children on his death bed, he said of Judah, "Thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise: thine hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee. Judah is a lion's whelp; from the prey, my son, art thou gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up? The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be."* The whole of which prophecy conveys the idea of the high distinction for which this tribe shall be above all the others remarkable; and most distinctly intimates that the "sceptre"—or, as it is more correctly translated by Bishop Newton, the tribeship or the separate being of the tribe—shall long continue after that of all the others is departed.

In the manner of encampment, and in the order of march during their forty years' journey in the

* Gen. xlix. 8—10.

wilderness, the post of honour was always assigned to this tribe. The camp of Judah, which was likewise most distinguished in point of number, always marched first; and its ensign or standard was erected in the centre of the east side, "toward the rising sun," when they stood still; that of Reuben was on the south; Ephraim on the west; and Dan on the north; each having a tribe right and left, and thus making, in a square, the complete number of twelve.*

But its chief pre-eminence as the favoured tribe from which Christ after the flesh was to spring, was shown in the distinct and formal GRANT of *the sovereignty*, which, in the house and person of David, was assigned to it, in perpetuity and for ever. Exactly therefore, by the same kind of title that the land of Judea belongs to the posterity of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, does the throne belong to the tribe of Judah and the house of David. And therefore, exactly the same kind of promise that secures the restoration to, and permanently future possession of, the one, equally secures and *demand*s that of the other. For if either the restoration to the land or to the throne could fail, then the promise, nay even the oath which God on both occasions hath sworn, fails likewise. But since the divine attributes forbid this thought—since God is declared to be the same "from everlasting to everlasting," and since He hath declared of himself that He is the Lord that CHANGETH NOT, I repeat that the terms of the gift, both as it regards the

* Numbers ij.

throne as well as the land, *demand* a restoration alike to both.

The terms in which the latter were conveyed have already been fully brought forward :* those in which the former are given, are the following. Speaking of Solomon, the Lord says: "He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom *for ever*.....And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever."† "I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, Thy seed will I establish *for ever*, and build up thy throne to all generations.Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven."‡

It is therefore, with regard to *the throne*, that, in the present case, this prophecy of the seven times must have an application ; because, for purposes essentially connected with the first coming of Christ, it being decreed that the tribeship should not depart from Judah until Messiah or *the Shiloh* came, it cannot, as in the case of the other ten tribes, have a reference to their dispersion, which did not take place until nearly six hundred years after their return from the Babylonish captivity, on the destruction of Jeru-

* See chapters i. and v.

† 2 Sam. vii. 13, 16.

‡ Psalm lxxxix. 3, 4 ; 35—37.

saalem by the Romans. Applied to Judah this period must refer therefore to the grant of the sovereignty which was peculiar to that tribe ; and which grant, as it remains in equal force with the one given to Abrabam, so it possesses, in an equal degree, the principle of resuscitation, which ere long, like Aaron's rod, shall bud, and blossom, and bear fruit.

The next inquiry is, presuming this view of the subject to be correct, from what particular year is this seven times, or 2520 years, in this its second application to be dated ?

It may be proper, in the first place, to notice, that as long as the kingdom of Judah stood, the crown did actually continue in the line and family of David. Unlike that of the Ten Tribes, which was continually changing from one family to another, and from one tribe to another, this crown continued in one unbroken line of succession from David to Jehoiakim, the last king who exercised the rights of an independent sovereign. And this succession from father to son included a space of about 450 years ; a circumstance unprecedented in the annals of history ! Not, indeed, that the kings of Judah were *all* men who walked after the ways of David, and did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord,—although such a succession of excellent men, in one kingdom, as Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah, men who truly feared God, are no where else to be found seated in one throne ;—yet there were some of them—particularly Jehoram, Ahaziah, Ahaz, and Manasseh—who were very wicked men, and who in a very horri-

ble manner provoked God. In virtue, however, of his oath and promise to David, and because they were the ancestors of Christ, he did not take away the crown for their wickedness. Speaking of Abijah's wicked reign, it is said : " For David's sake did the Lord his God give him a lamp in Jerusalem, to set up his son after him, and to establish Jerusalem : " * Likewise in 2 Chron. xxi. 7, speaking of Jehoram's great wickedness, the same reason is given why the Lord continued his family on the throne : " Howbeit the Lord would not destroy the house of David, because of the covenant that he made with David, and as he promised to give a light to him and to his sons for ever."

Not indeed, speaking after the manner of men, that this line was not several times in danger of being broken, and indeed destroyed ; particularly when Athaliah conspired to murder all the seed royal, and proceeded so far in its accomplishment as to imagine she had actually accomplished her purpose.† And also, in the instance of the confederacy formed by the kings of Syria and Israel ‡ to dispossess Ahaz and his family of the throne, and set up in their place another family, " even the son of Tabeal.§" On both these occasions the house of David seemed to be on the very brink of destruction, but the blessing that was in it saved it ; and in these, as well as in every threatened danger, it was preserved up to the time

* 1 Kings xv. 4.

† See chap. ii.

† 2 Kings xi.

§ Isa. vii. 6.

of Nebuchadnezzar's invasion, when, with the nation in general, it went into captivity.

In the consideration of the seventy years' Babylonish captivity, we have seen that there were two commencements from which it is to be dated—namely, the years 606 and 588 B. C.: it must, therefore, be somewhere between these two points of time, from whence the loss of this regal and sovereign authority is to be reckoned. I consider that the last independent act of sovereignty exercised by Jehoiakim, the last king of Judah, must have been what is related in 2 Kings xxiv. 1: "In his days Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up, and Jehoiakim became his servant three years: then he turned and *rebelled against him.*" It is then added, in the next verse, that "the Lord sent against him bands of the Chaldees, and bands of the Syrians, and bands of the Moabites, and bands of the children of Ammon, and sent them against Judah to destroy it."

Now, as Nebuchadnezzar first carried away Judah captive in 606, it would be three years after this, in 603, when Jehoiakim rebelled against him; and it is probable that it was not longer than the following year that he was able to maintain himself against the mighty power of the king of Babylon, and the other nations that came against him. This would bring it to 602 or 601 B. C.; and as he died two or three years afterwards, and his son and successor Jehoiachin was, immediately on his accession, carried captive to Babylon, where he lived many years, it appears to me that it must have been about the

time of this year that *the last independant act* of sovereignty was performed by the rightful king: for Zedekiah, whom Nebuchadnezzar placed upon the throne, could not be considered as the rightful monarch whilst Jehoiachin was living. Besides which he was not an independent monarch, being merely as a satrap, ruling with a delegated power. If this reasoning be correct, then the year 602 or 601 B. C. is the point of time from which to date the loss of the throne by the house of David; and, consequently, after the lapse of the long period of 2520 years, the year 1918 or 1919 after Christ will be the time when it will be again restored to its rightful owner.

The difficulty of fixing upon correct epochas from which to date chronological prophetic periods, has always been experienced by every writer on the subject; and that difficulty would have been felt to a greater extent in this instance, had not the attention been directed to this rebellion of Jehoiakim against Nebuchadnezzar, by Calmet's and other tables of chronology; and likewise been confirmed by a subsequent prophecy of Daniel, which will be hereafter noticed in this chapter, and which will be found to bring the season of "blessedness" to the same termination as the period under consideration. There can therefore be no reason to hesitate in saying that the commencement ought to be dated somewhere about the year 602, at least to within a year: for the first invasion of Nebuchadnezzar being in the year 606, and Jehoiachin being carried captive to Babylon in 600, if Jehoiakim, after three years' allegiance,

threw off for a short time Nebuchadnezzar's yoke, he was, for so long a time as he remained unsubdued, exercising the rights of sovereignty ; and therefore the commencement of this period cannot be reckoned prior to this time. It is also clear it cannot be reckoned after Jehoiachin was carried into captivity ; for no independent act of sovereignty was ever afterwards exercised. It therefore seems extremely probable that 602 or 601 B. c. is its correct date.

If, then, the restoration of the house of David to the throne of Judah is to be calculated from this year—and which great event, according to this hypothesis, will take place A. D. 1918 or 1919—it remains to be considered, WHO IS THE RIGHTFUL HEIR TO THIS HONOURED THRONE ?

The genealogy of the royal house of David, from Jehoiakim downwards, is given as follows in the first chapter of Matthew, from the 12th to the 16th verses : “ And after they were brought to Babylon, Jechonias begat Salathiel ; and Salathiel begat Zorobabel ; and Zorobabel begat Abiud ; and Abiud begat Eliakim ; and Eliakim begat Azor ; and Azor begat Sadoc ; and Sadoc begat Achim ; and Achim begat Eliud ; and Eliud begat Eleazar ; and Eleazar begat Matthan ; and Matthan begat Jacob ; and Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.” Christ was thus “ legally descended from the kings of Judah, though he was not naturally descended from them. He was both legally and naturally descended from David. He was naturally descended from Nathan, the son of

David ; for Mary his mother was of the posterity of David by Nathan, as may be seen in Luke's genealogy :* but Joseph, the reputed and legal father of Christ, was naturally descended from Solomon and his successors, as we have an account in Matthew's genealogy. Jesus Christ, though he was not the natural son of Joseph, yet by the law and constitution of the Jews he was Joseph's lawful heir ; he was the lawful son of Joseph's lawful wife, conceived while she was his legally espoused wife. The Holy Ghost raised up seed to him. A person by the law of Moses might be the legal son and heir of another whose natural son he was not ; as sometimes a man raised up seed to his brother : a brother in some cases was to build up a brother's house ; so the Holy Ghost built up Joseph's house. And Joseph being in the direct line of the kings of Judah, the house of David, he was the legal heir to the crown of David ; and Christ being legally his first born son, he was his heir ; and so Christ, by the law, was the proper heir of the crown of David, and is therefore said to sit upon the throne of his father David."†

The grant of sovereignty, therefore, which was entailed upon the house of David, is thus graciously accepted, in his person as God-man Mediator, by him who conferred it, and who is at once *the root as well as the offspring of David*. When we reflect on this great and infinite condescension, we shall not be surprised that David, who as a prophet well

* Luke iv. 23—38.

† Edwards on Redemption.

knew the import of the blessing that was conferred upon him, should exclaim in overpowering gratitude: "Who am I, O Lord God? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord God; but thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come. And is this the manner of man, O Lord God? . . . For thou hast confirmed to thyself thy people Israel, to be a people unto thee *for ever*: and thou, Lord, art become their God. And now, O Lord God, the word that thou has spoken concerning thy servant, and concerning his house, establish it for ever, and do as thou hast said. And let thy name be magnified for ever, saying, The Lord of hosts is the God over Israel: and let the house of thy servant David be established before thee."* The original language expresses much more fully than our translation, the idea that David's chief joy arose in this acknowledgment, from his knowledge of its being the Messiah, the promised Saviour, that was to sit upon his throne; accordingly Peter says, Acts ii. 30: "Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, *he would raise up CHRIST to sit on his throne.*"

Though there may be, and undoubtedly are, as appears from Zech. xii. 12, some of the royal house of David yet in existence—they being there mentioned as among the first remnant of those that shall

* 2 Sam. vii. 18, 19, 24—26.

be settled at Jerusalem—yet as Christ, the eternal Son of God, in condescending to be born, and taking our nature, made himself the true and rightful heir to David's throne, there appears to be no reason, when we remember the deep humiliation to which he subjected himself at his first coming, why the express language used by the angel Gabriel in announcing his birth should not be understood *literally*. It runs thus: "Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him THE THRONE OF HIS FATHER DAVID: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob *for ever*; and of his kingdom there shall be no end." *

In fact, it is much more analogous to the general course of the Divine procedure, that Christ, in thus making himself the heir of David, *did intend* to take possession of David's throne, and to make himself literally—what he is and always was virtually—king in Zion. And from a passage in Ezekiel, it is difficult to understand any thing else but that it is his intention to do so. "Thus saith the Lord God; Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn it; and it shall be no more, *until He*

* Luke i. 30—33.

come WHOSE RIGHT IT IS ; *and I will give it him.*" *

Besides, the comparatively short time that the house of David hath yet reigned, but ill comports with the language of this splendid grant. The present royal family of France has actually possessed the throne of that kingdom, in its direct and collateral branches, nearly double the length of time that the throne of Judah has yet been in possession of the house of David. The plea which the Lord puts into the mouth of his people, in supplicating for his mercy, as it regards their future restoration, may equally be applied to the sovereignty as it is to the land : "Return for thy servants' sake, the tribes of thine inheritance. The people of thy holiness have possessed it but a LITTLE WHILE : our adversaries have trodden down thy sanctuary. We are thine : thou never bearest rule over them ; they were not called by thy name."†

David certainly understood from the language of this grant, as any one else would also understand, something more than the temporary enjoyment of the throne ; and that chiefly over only two out of the Twelve Tribes. The delight with which he often dwells upon the subject in the Psalms appears to place it beyond a question, that he saw, through the long vista of ages, Christ, as his descendant after the flesh, reigning in Jerusalem with a splendour and

* Chap. xxi. 26, 27.

† Isaiah lxiii. 17—19.

glory of which nothing that the world has ever yet seen can give an adequate idea. "The Lord hath chosen Zion: he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it. I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread. I will also clothe her priests with salvation; and her saints shall shout aloud for joy. There will I make the HORN OF DAVID TO BUD: I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed. His enemies will I clothe with shame; but upon himself SHALL HIS CROWN FLOURISH."* And again, "In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth... The kings of Tarshish and the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him."†

In the case of Christ, it is no objection, as it would be to a mere created being, that he has passed through the territories of the grave. Death had no power over him; for, after being under its dominion a part of three days only, he rose, leading captivity captive, *and his flesh saw no corruption*. He carried with him *our nature*, united to his own Divine nature, into Heaven; where he now appears, clothed *in that body* in the presence of God, for us.

This argument, as if the Psalmist had foreseen the

* Psalms cxxxii. 13—18.

† Idem. lxxii. 7, 8, 10, 11.

objection that might arise from the death of Christ in reference to the kingdom, he brings forward very prominently and distinctly: "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption."* In allusion to this, Peter said in his first sermon, Acts ii. 31, "He seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ, that *his* soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption." And again: "For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption; but he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption."†

As death, therefore, had no power over his body, and as he *still lives* in that same incorruptible body in which he purchased our redemption, he consequently remains *in his own person* still the legitimate heir of the throne of David. Whenever that throne shall be re-established—and according to the anticipations of the elegant and accomplished Heber,

"E'en now perhaps wide waving o'er the land,
The mighty angel lifts his golden wand;
Courts the bright vision of descending power,
Tells every gate, and measures every tower;
And chides the tardy seals that yet detain
Thy Lion, Judah, from his destin'd reign."

—whenever this consummation arrives, and God has pleaded with them, and placed them in a secure, settled, and happy state; then, who—besides the true

* Psalm xvi. 10.

† Acts xiii. 36, 37.

and legitimate heir of David, to whose posterity in perpetuity the throne is confirmed by the oath and promise of God—who besides Christ *can* reign over them whose right it is ?”

When the disciples beheld the Saviour risen from the grave, and thus saw him triumph over death, their expectations revived that he was going to take possession of the kingdom ; and hence they asked, “ Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel ?” He did not blame them for the question, nor did he contradict their hopes ; his answer rather seemed to confirm them. “ He said unto them, It is not for you to know the times and the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you : and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up ; and *a cloud* received him out of their sight.” * And the Psalmist tells how he was received and welcomed. Angels are represented as calling out and saying, “ Lift up your heads, O ye gates ; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors ; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory ? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates ; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors ; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King

* Acts i. 7—9.

of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory.”*

After Jesus had thus disappeared from the sight of his disciples, “while they looked stedfastly towards heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? *This same Jesus*, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so COME IN LIKE MANNER as ye have seen him go into heaven.”† Here it is plainly asserted by special messengers from God, immediately after Christ had ascended into heaven, and while those who saw this wonderful event were still looking up, that He should *come again* in like manner as they had seen him go—that is, *in a cloud*; and this is confirmed in several other places in the Scriptures.

In a subsequent chapter, Acts iii. 21, Peter says, alluding to this subject, that he will remain in heaven “until the times of *restitution of all things*, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began:” which implies that after this restitution of all things, he WILL NOT remain in Heaven. It is a striking reservation, and, in connection with our Lord’s second coming to reign, deserves the deepest consideration. As it regards this *time of general restitution*, it can be no other than that so eloquently spoken of by Isaiah and the prophets; and that season of blessedness before

* Ps. xxiv. 7—10.

† Acts i. 10, 11.

noticed, which is prophesied of in Daniel (chap. xii. 12), and which will be proved to take place at the same time as the termination of this present period. It is that happy time so beautifully described by Cowper in his "Winter's Walk at Noon," where he says:—

"The Time of rest, the promised sabbath, comes :

Six thousand years of sorrow have well nigh

Fulfill'd their tardy and disastrous course

Over a sinful world ; and what remains

Of this tempestuous state of human things

Is merely as the working of a sea

Before a calm, that rocks itself to rest :

For he——

Shall visit earth in mercy ; shall descend

Propitious in his chariot pav'd with love ;

And what his storms have blasted and defac'd

For man's revolt, shall with a smile repair."

The Saviour himself, speaking of the manner of his second coming, says, "Then shall they see the Son of man coming IN A CLOUD, with power and great glory."

At his first coming, which was to satisfy Divine justice, to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to work out a righteousness in which guilty sinners might be saved, he came *to suffer*. He was a root of a dry ground—a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief: there was no form nor comeliness in him ; and his poverty was so great, that he could say, "the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." The royal house of David had thus been suffered to pass into obscurity and poverty, that He, in these

his days of humiliation, might “in *all things* be made like unto his brethren ; for it became him for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect *through suffering*.”

But at his second coming the scene will be changed ; he will then not come to suffer, but to *triumph* ; he will come as he went—“*in a cloud, with power and great glory*.” What is meant by these words we must wait to see. The magnificent scene is thus described in the Revelation : “And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse ; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were *many crowns* ; and he had a name written, that no man knew but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood : and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations : and he shall rule them with a rod of iron ; and he treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.” *

The rule which he shall then exercise over the “house of Jacob,” as an *united*, no longer a *divided*

* Rev. xix. 11—16.

nation, is very strikingly described in Ezekiel xxxvii. The Lord commanded the prophet to take "one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions: then" to "take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions: and join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in thine hand. And when the children of thy people shall speak unto thee, saying, Wilt thou not shew us what thou meanest by these? say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand. And the sticks whereon thou writest shall be in thine hand before their eyes. And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them to their own land: and I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; *and one king shall be king to them all*: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all: ...AND DAVID MY SERVANT SHALL BE KING over them: and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have

dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they and their children and their children's children, *for ever*; and my SERVANT DAVID SHALL BE THEIR PRINCE FOR EVER."*

David of course, in this place, as in many others, must refer to Christ; for it cannot mean David himself, who died and saw corruption, and has been succeeded in his kingdom by so many generations. Besides which, David, throughout a great part of the Psalms, speaks in the person of Christ as if he were Christ himself. Therefore the conclusion appears irresistible, from such a cloud of evidence, from so many strong passages both in the Old and New Testaments, that at the time *of the restoration of all things*, Christ will take unto himself his great power and reign; and that *at this time* "unto Him shall the gathering of the people be!"†

I cannot conceive of any language that could be used plainer, or less likely to misconstruction, than that above quoted. It affords the strongest confirmation of all that has been advanced as it regards the restoration of the descendants of Abraham, both to the land and to the throne. In the beautiful illustration which it gives of the union of the two kingdoms into one—in the assertion that both the people of Israel and Judah have been scattered among the heathen *on every side*, and that from such a scattering they shall be gathered in and brought to their own land, and be no more two nations, but one nation;

* Ver. 17—22, 24, 25.

† Gen. xlix. 10.

and that they shall never more be divided into two kingdoms—finally, that one king shall be king to them all, and that king be David, that is Christ, and that He shall be their prince for ever—in these words, I say, events are spoken of clear, consistent, in perfect harmony with each other, and with all the Lord's former dealings with this people. And they are events which must be future, for nothing of the kind has ever yet happened—the Jews are not yet gathered in on every side, and restored to their own land—the Twelve Tribes are not yet firmly and indissolubly joined together in one nation—nor since this prophecy, has one king reigned over them, which when it happens is to be for ever !

What construction then can be put upon such predictions, but that if they have not happened, *they will happen* ? What can we possibly understand by them but that the Jews *will be* restored to their own land from their present wide-spread dispersion—that they will all be united in one body—and that Christ will reign over them ? We have an undoubted right to say, that, as all the former prophecies concerning the Jews, and likewise concerning the various particulars of the life and death of Christ during his incarnation, were literally fulfilled, so shall these be fulfilled in like manner.

The Jews have done right in expecting their Messiah to come as a king ; it is an expectation for which they have the strongest Divine sanction ; and which, whenever it happens, will be their crowning

blessing. The fatal mistake they made—the rock on which they split—was, overlooking their Messiah's first coming; and, as is done in our day respecting his second coming, perverting every thing that was said respecting it. They were wilfully ignorant; it was contrary to their pre-conceived ideas, their wishes, their schemes, and hence the very thought almost drove them to madness, and continues to do so up to the present moment. And yet, after all this opposition, this wilful rejection, this determined unbelief, after all *He was* their long expected Saviour—the burden of their prophecies—the end of all their types and shadows. Independently of His sufferings and death, their bloody sacrifices had no other end, no other object; and many of their clearest prophecies could have no other fulfilment: and yet they could not or would not see it. “He came unto his own, and his own received him not.”*

Such was their mistake; and we are guilty of a similar one; if we reject the equally clear predictions of his second coming, which speak of him as a king. To say that all these unequivocal expressions merely express a spiritual reign, appears an unwarranted and an unnatural forcing of words from their plain straightforward meaning; for a spiritual reign comports not with our ideas of a sovereign. David, in his own person, had no doubt a spiritual reign in the hearts of the Israelites long before he possessed the throne;

* John i. 11.

stationary, but rather precarious greatness ; a third of rapid decline.* Elmacinus divides their history into three books : the first, their origin and increase, from 622 to 746 ; the second, their declension ; the third, their distractions and dissipations. Still more to the point, Mr. Mills, in his History of Moham-medanism, considers the foundation of Bagdad *as a marked chronological era* in the Saracenic empire ; the period which preceded it being that of the *undivided Caliphate*, or the rise of the Saracenic power ; while the period which succeeds it, that of the *divided Caliphate*, or the decline and fall of the Saracenic power.*

This brings me to the last observation I have to make, which is this, that the very circumstance of a *divided* caliphate shews they were no longer the prophetic locusts ; for they had only *one* king over them ; whereas, after the foundation of Bagdad, the chair of Mahomet was disputed by three caliphs, or commanders of the Faithful, who reigned with almost equal magnificence at Bagdad, Cairo, and Cordova.

* On the Middle Ages, Vol. II. p. 176.

† Mills' History of Mahommedanism, p. 44, 104, 105, 132.



CHAPTER IX.

THE

JUDGMENTS OF GOD UPON THE EMPIRE,

MORE ESPECIALLY IN THE EAST,

ON THE SOUNDING OF THE SIXTH TRUMPET;

OR

THE RISE AND ESTABLISHMENT OF THE
TURKS, OR OTTOMANS.

The four horns of the altar—Second “Woe” comes at some distance of time from the first—Fall of the Saracens—First Turkish Sultan—The Turks a great people before they were restrained or “bound”—Divided into four kingdoms on the Euphrates—Their being bound—By their own divisions—By the Crusades—By the Moguls—Their being loosed—Rise of the Ottoman Power—Work it was to perform—Preparation for it—Time of its continuance—Description of the Turks—Their overthrow of the Eastern Empire—Fall of Constantinople—Establishment of Mahometanism on its ruins—Attempts on the West—Western Idolatry and Wickedness.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SECOND WOE TRUMPET;

OR

THE JUDGMENTS BROUGHT ABOUT BY THE TURKS.

“AND the sixth angel sounded; and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar, which is before God, saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet.” (ix. 13, 14.)

For an account of the four horns of the golden altar—a description of which altar, as connected with these trumpets, was above given*—see Exodus xxvii. 2.

They were eminences or upright projections, not merely for ornament, but also that beasts might be bound to them;—“Bind the sacrifice with cords even to the horns of the altar.”† But perhaps the more correct idea of the symbol is given in the margin of Ezekiel xliii. 15, where it is said, “The altar and upwards shall be four horns,”—or the “lion of God;”‡ horns being thus considered as expressive of strength, power, or kingdoms.

* Ch. vii. p. 120.

† Psalms cxviii. 27.

‡ Exodus xxx. 10.

A voice proceeding from such a place is not only “a strong indication,” as Bishop Newton beautifully observes, “of Divine displeasure, but plainly intimates that the sins of men must have been very great, when the altar, which was their sanctuary and protection, called aloud for vengeance.” Being said to proceed from the four horns of the altar, indicates that the strength and majesty of the Most High are concerned in the infliction of this vengeance ; and it seems to express, that no intercession should any longer avail to prevent the execution of this woe.

The command conveyed by the voice is :

“Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates.” (ver. 14.)

These words convey the following ideas :—

1st. That some considerable time had elapsed since the former “woe.” It would seem as if the patience of God had waited long, before He brought again upon the professing backsliding church such another scourge as the last ; and this idea is in harmony with the declaration made in the 12th verse, that “one woe is past, and behold there come two more woes *hereafter* ;”—an expression which looks forward to a considerable space of time.

We have seen that it was in the year 762 when the Saracens ceased to be like “locusts,” and when they became settled, and built Bagdad, the City of Peace. Rahdi, who flourished about A.D. 940, and was the thirty-ninth of the successors of Mahomet, was the last who deserved the title of “Commander

of the Faithful ;” the last who spoke to the people, or conversed with the learned : the last who, in the expense of his household, represented the wealth and magnificence of the caliphs. After him, the lords of the Eastern world were reduced to the most abject misery, and exposed to the blows and insults of a servile condition.*

In this fallen state, with their power diminished, their empire weakened, their revenues taken away, and with nothing left but the name, the rising power of the *Turks* broke in upon them, and upon the world. This great people proceeded originally from a nation which dwelt north-east of the Caspian Sea. One of the greatest of their early princes was Mahmud, who reigned over the eastern provinces of Persia one thousand years after the birth of Christ, and about four hundred years after Mahomet. “His father,” remarks Gibbon, “was the slave of the slave of the *slave* of the Commander of the Faithful.” In his conquests he surpassed the limits of those of Alexander,† and for him the title of Sultan was invented. The following, as related of him by Gibbon, is deeply interesting. “His behaviour in the last days of his life evinces the vanity of these possessions, so laboriously won, so dangerously held, and so inevitably lost. He surveyed the vast and various chambers of the treasury of *Gazna* ; burst into tears ; and again closed the doors, without bestowing any portion of the wealth which he could no longer hope to preserve.

* Gibbon.

† Diss. ch. xii. 279.

The following day he reviewed the state of his military force, one hundred thousand foot, fifty-five thousand horse, and thirteen hundred elephants of battle. He again wept at the instability of human greatness."

After Mahmud was removed, the Turkish princes of the race of Seljuk, by whom he had been defeated, erected a splendid and solid empire on the ruins of the Caliphate. The first of this dynasty was Togrul, or as he is sometimes called Tangrolipix, the grandson of Seljuk; he began to be famous about the year 1038. After conquering Bagdad, he was clothed with the imperial purple, by the caliph Cayem A.D. 1055, and constituted the ruler of the kingdom, "the temporal vicegerent of the Moslem world." This inauguration was the grand downfall of the Saracenic empire, and the first important rise of the Turks.

2nd. This brings us to the second idea conveyed by this command to the sixth angel, that the people to whom it points were prominently in sight, and had been *let loose* upon the Roman world before they were "bound;" that they had, after the fall of the Saracens, *begun their devastations, but were providentially restrained*—there appears otherwise no point in the expression. And such was the case with the Turks. Under the successor of Togrul, they invaded the Roman empire with "myriads of Turkish horse;"* and, adds the historian, "the blood of one hundred and thirty thousand Christians was a grateful sacrifice to the

* Gibbon.

Arabian prophet." The Sultan passed the Euphrates at the head of his cavalry, and entered Cæsarea, the metropolis of Cappadocia; and before his death the fairest provinces of Roman Asia were irretrievably sacrificed, and subject to his laws; while twelve hundred kings or chiefs stood before his throne, and two hundred thousand soldiers marched under his banners.

His son and successor was Malek Shah, who reigned from the year 1072 to the year 1092; was, it is said, the greatest prince of his age; and "marched at the head of innumerable armies." From the Chinese frontier he stretched his immediate jurisdiction, or feudatory sway, to the west and to the south, as far as the mountains of Georgia, the neighbourhood of Constantinople, the Holy City of Jerusalem, and the spicy groves of Arabia Felix;* and in his reign Asia Minor began to be known by the name of Turkey.

3rd. The third idea conveyed by this command is, that those instruments of Divine vengeance were, at the time they were bound, not, as we have just contemplated them, a united but a *divided* people, "Loose the *four* angels which are bound upon the river Euphrates."

Accordingly, after the death of Malek Shah, A. D. 1092, the greatness and unity of this race of the Turkish sultans expired in the four-fold division of their hitherto united empire, and the vast fabric fell

* Gibbon.

to the ground. "After a series of civil wars," observes Mr. Mills, "four dynasties, contemporary, and not successive, were formed:" all of the house of Seljuk. The first commanded *Persia* at large, the second that of *Kerman*, an extensive though obscure dominion on the shores of the Indian ocean: the third, a large portion of *Syria*, including Aleppo and Damascus; and the fourth *Roum*, or the Roman provinces of Asia Minor.* It is true that this quadruple division did not long continue; but from the circumstance of its being made at the time the restraint was first put upon the threatening power of the Turks—in other words, at the time of their being bound—it is here brought forward as a mark of identity, in a similar manner to the fourfold division of the empire of Alexander the Great.

This mark of identity is further strengthened by these four divisions of the Turkish empire being all situated in regions bordering on the river Euphrates, which was the confines and last bounds of the Roman world in Asia, and from its continuing to be the place or neighbourhood of their residence during the two hundred years they were bound or restrained; and it makes the recognition complete.

These instruments of destruction or judgment are called angels, as representing messengers who execute the providential designs of the Most High. In this prophecy they are frequently mentioned, both as messengers of mercy and of anger, both of good

* History of Mahom. p. 223. See likewise Gibbon.

and evil. In this place they appear to be used much in the sense of those mentioned in the 49th verse of the 78th Psalm : “ He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, wrath, and indignation, and trouble, by sending *evil angels* among them.”

With these preliminary observations, we now come to the more immediate identification in the text—their being *bound*. It is very evident, that with such an immense and victorious power as that which was possessed by the three successive Turkish Sultans above described, and whose armies were almost at the very gates of Constantinople, the Eastern Roman Empire must, to all human appearance, soon have fallen. Such, however, not being the decree of Heaven, this great calamity was postponed, until the middle of the fifteenth century, and therefore a serious and effectual check was to be put to their progress. The first means employed was their own fatal divisions, which weakened the empire to that degree, that they at once lost their imposing and formidable attitude, and the Turkish veterans were employed or consumed in civil wars. The chief means, however, by which their power was restrained, and most effectually checked, and which confined them for the space of two hundred years within the bounds of the Euphrates, was the desperate, formidable, enthusiastic attacks made upon them by the combined nations of the West, in what are called the Crusades. The first of these commenced A. D. 1095, about three years after the Sultan Malek Shah, and, therefore, immediately after the four fold division of

his empire consequent upon that event; it may, therefore, with strict propriety be said, the four nations *of the Turks were then bound in the Euphrates*.

The occasion of these romantic and deeply disastrous expeditions, it is well known, was the rough treatment which pilgrims to the Holy Land had received from the hands of the Turks, and which caused Europe to resound with their complaints. The Saracens, whilst it was in their possession, had allowed them to visit the city of Jerusalem, on payment of a small tribute; but the place being taken, in the year 1065, by the more fierce and barbarous Turks, it could no longer be approached with safety. It soon became the theatre of nations, the central point of the most destructive and long continued warfare; in the course of which, the power of the Turks was so completely broken, that they were almost removed from sight, and the only adversaries the Crusaders had to deal with, were at length the Mamelukes of Egypt.

A third cause, which contributed still further to weaken and restrain the power of the Turks, were the various revolutions of Asia during this period, occasioned chiefly by the conquests of Zingis Khan, the first emperor of the Moguls or Tartars, who reigned from A. D. 1206 to 1227; and his successors. In 1258, one of the latter *extinguished the Saracenic Caliphs*, who had, since the fall of the Turkish Sultans, recovered the possession of Bagdad; and, about the same time, when the power of the Crusaders in the Holy Land was decaying, they made

such inroads upon the Turks all over Asia, that they took away all their Sultanies from them. They did indeed suffer some of them to enjoy their sovereignty in some small part of their ancient dominions, but only as their slaves or tributaries. Gibbon observes, speaking of the Moguls, that had they “undertaken the siege, Constantinople must have yielded to the fate of Pekin, Samarcand, and Bagdad.”* Thus was the binding of the four nations of the Turks effected by the united influence of the invasions of the Moguls, by the Crusades, and by their own divisions.

We are brought, by these observations, to the commencement, or to the first action of this great Woe ; viz. the removal of the above restraints : “Loose the four angels that are bound on the great river Euphrates”—was the high, the awful command to the sixth angel—

“And the four angels were loosed !” (ver. 15.)

This important re-action in the history of the Turks, took place in the last few years of the thirteenth century. In the first place, the restraint caused by the Crusades was removed. The eighth and last left the west of Europe about A. D. 1279 ; and in the year 1291 the Mameluke sultan took Acre by assault, and obliged the Crusaders to *evacuate Asia* ; since which period, although several popes have attempted to stir up their adherents, no more of such expeditions have been undertaken for the reco-

* Gibbon, ch. lxiv.

very of the Holy Land; and accordingly, from henceforward to the present time, it has been in the hands of the Mahometans.

In the second place, about the same time, the Mogul Tartars being defeated and divided among themselves, and Cazan one of their greatest and most accomplished princes dying, the distance and decline of their khans or emperors soon enfranchised the Turks from all controul in this quarter.

In the third place, the restraint of a divided sovereignty was removed. The year 1290 saw the rise of Othman, the founder of the PRESENT RACE of the Turkish Sultans, and of the Ottoman empire; the progress of which empire is “connected with the most important scenes of modern history.” The fragments of the Seljukian monarchy were disputed by the Emirs, who had occupied the cities or the mountains; but they all confessed the superiority of the Khans. One of these Emirs, the grandfather of Othman, was drowned in the Euphrates, as he was passing that river in 1214 with his three sons. One of these sons, Orthogrul, who was the father of Othman, remained in the vicinity of that river, while the other two returned to Persia. “Othman possessed, and perhaps surpassed, the ordinary virtues of a soldier; and the circumstances of time and place were propitious to his independence and success. Besides the cessation of the Crusades, and the decline of the Moguls, both of which events gave a free scope to the rise and progress of his empire, all the Turkish kingdoms,

families, or tribes, subjected themselves to him, either compelled by force, or of their own accord.

He succeeded his father Orthogrul, about the year 1290 ; and, at first, under Aladin the sultan of Iconium, made some incursions and conquests on the Roman Empire. It was, however, on the twenty-seventh of July, in the year one thousand two hundred and ninety-nine of the Christian era, that Othman first invaded the territory of Nicomedia, and the singular accuracy of the date seems to disclose some foresight of the rapid and destructive growth of the monster.”* In his person, therefore, as the universally acknowledged founder of the present race of the Turks, and as representing the whole nation, the four angels were loosed, and the sixth trumpet sounded !

—————“ Which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men.” (v. 15.)

Three things are here especially to be noticed :—

1st. The work to be accomplished :

2d. A time of preparation for it :

3d. The period of its continuance.

With regard to the work for which the Turks were loosed, it is said to be for the purpose of *slaying the third part of men*. To kill a body politic is to make it cease to be, either by utterly destroying the people of it, or by subjecting it to a new authority, whereby it ceases to be what it was before. Thus to deprive of political life and government one-

* Gibbon, ch. lxiv.

third part of men, must therefore signify, in this place, to consign to political destruction one-third part of the Roman Empire. The three parts of which the whole consisted, have been already described :* that which is here prophesied of, must, from all the particulars, but chiefly from its locality to the Euphrates, be the Eastern portion. The other two parts, although in the West the imperial majesty of the empire had revived, had already changed masters and inhabitants. The East alone survived ; and while the successive invasions of seven hundred years had lopped off all its limbs, one by one, and the majesty and glory of the Roman name were almost, ultimately, confined to the walls of Constantinople, still the pulse beat at the heart. The Turks were loosed for the purpose of striking at that heart, and piercing it : they were to kill where the Saracens had only hurt ; and their kingdom was finally to supplant the eastern Roman Empire. This being the work they were to accomplish, we have now, in the second place, to consider,

Their PREPARATION for it. It was not immediately on the rise of Othman, and the removal of the restraints that had confined them to the Euphrates, that they were to be in a position to strike this great blow, and to seize this destined victim of their future aggrandizement and splendour—the greatest prize in the diadem of Europe. There was to be the prepara-

* Ch. vii. p. 125.

tion of a century and a half, during which period a succession of warlike and active princes, who were at the same time cruel and merciless tyrants, established and consolidated the revived empire, retracing the steps of the former Seljukian monarchs, and stopping not till the great object of their ambition was attained. In this interval they had occasionally powerful and active enemies to contend with; these were chiefly the Latins of the West, against whom they were generally victorious: and the Tartars under the dread Timour or Tamerlagne. The latter, defeated in 1402, one of their most distinguished sultans, Bajazet, called, from the rapidity of his conquests, *the Lightning*, in a very great battle, and took him prisoner. By this decisive victory, the fall of Constantinople was delayed about fifty years; and the massy trunk of the Ottoman monarchy was bent to the ground; but no sooner did the hurricane pass away, than it again arose with fresh vigour and more lively vegetation.*

THE PERIOD OF ITS CONTINUANCE; “an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year.”

The precision and minuteness with which this annunciation is made, bespeaks that it is for a very particular purpose; and hence that it demands very particular attention. In fact, the very circumstance of *a week* being left out shews design. It can scarcely be necessary for me to say, that, with the

* Gibbon.

great body of commentators, I consider that it is not a literal but a symbolical date ; and, that the usual mode of prophetic computation, which has already been explained and applied, is still to be adhered to. This will bring the hour, the day, the month, and the year, to 391 prophetic days, which are consequently to be considered as years.*

The great error which I conceive commentators have made with regard to this important duration, and the cause of its being so little attended to for any practical effect, is in its wrong and mistaken application. Instead of joining it to the action itself, which action is the great object of the vision, it has generally been thought to belong to the preparation, and the dates of events of minor importance have been strained thus to accommodate it. I am persuaded, however, that the true idea has been expressed by Dean Woodhouse in the following words : “ The continuance of time to be measured is that during which the evil angels *continue to slay the third part of men* : ” — that is, during which the Turks retain their hold of Constantinople, the seat of the vitality of the Eastern Empire. Looking at it in this light, how consistent and appropriate is the recognition of the chronological period as symbolical ! The whole 15th verse thus considered will read, in plain language, as follows : “ And the four nations of the Turks, which had been bound on the river Euphrates, were loosed, which were prepared for 391 years and a

* Sir Isaac Newton, p. 307.

month, to consign to political destruction the eastern Roman empire." In other words, a great nation was prepared by God, to do a very great work, which work was to continue 391 years.

After this comes the following particular and terrible description of the "four angels," that is, of the Turks.

"And the number of the army of the horsemen was two myriads of myriads, and I heard the number of them. And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and those that sat on them having breast-plates of fire, of hyacinth, and of brimstone. And the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions." (vers. 16, 17.)

I should consider, from the action of the vision having been immediately mentioned previous to this description, that it referred to the time they were fully prepared for it,—not as they appeared in their incipient state under Othman, when first loosed, but as they appeared under the "great destroyer" Mahomet II., who brought his hundreds of thousands of troops for the performance of the great work he had to accomplish. The symbol of horses to which these are likened, I conceive, signifies an army of veteran well-disciplined soldiery, and is one which on this account could not have been applied to the instruments of any of the former trumpets. The locusts of the fifth are indeed said to be *like* horses for war (ver. 7)—that is, to *resemble* real warfare,—on the contrary, those of the present trumpet *are* horses; they *have* all the tact, discipline, and material of real war.

Another proof of this is, their being exactly num-

bered. While the amazing multitude here expressed implies there should be no lack of strength and force—the calling out the number implies something like the calling over the names of a muster. “I heard,” says the Apostle, “the number of them.” The idea is conveyed of an immense army in the highest state of discipline, and such as was that of the Turkish sultan at the siege of Constantinople.

The breast-plates of the riders were *fire*, *hyacinth*, and *brimstone*. The breast-plates of the Saracens are described as iron.* Both appear to refer to the formidable and destructive weapons with which they were to be armed ;—but in the difference of description an essential difference in those of the two people is implied. And such was the case. “Among the implements of destruction, it is said Mahomet II. studied with peculiar care the recent and tremendous discovery of the Latins ; and his artillery surpassed whatever had yet appeared in the world, and was employed with the superior energy of zeal, riches, and despotism.” The great cannon of Mahomet, it is said, was “an important and visible object in the history of the times.” It is no far-fetched idea to suppose, that these tremendous engines of destruction, which had only been brought to perfection about half a century before, and which had so effective and notable an influence in the success of the Turkish sultan, are represented by the symbols of breast-plates of *fire*, *hyacinth*, and *brim-*

* Ch. viii. p. 156.

stone ;—“ fire,” signifying destruction, havoc, and war ; “ hyacinth,” the colour of clouds and smoke ; and “ brimstone,” an ingredient of gunpowder. As the implement was new, so no where, in any of the prophets, or in any other part of the sacred writings, do any such like representations as *hyacinth* and *brimstone* before occur.

The heads of the horses being as the heads of lions, implies their great and untameable ferocity, as the fierceness of lions : and out of the horses’ *mouths* *issuing fire, and smoke, and brimstone*, appears to intimate that both their offensive as well as their defensive armour was of the same description—the one being represented as breast-plates, the other by the horses having actually instruments of the same signification proceeding out of their mouths.

“ By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, by the smoke, and by the brimstone issuing out of their mouths.” (ver. 18.)

Here these remarkable expressions are repeated for the third time ; and by being thus distinctly mentioned as three, “ these three,” it might be supposed they referred to three distinct causes of destruction, each exerting their influence to bring about the great catastrophe. In this case, *fire*, as above named, will refer to the general havoc of war ; *smoke*, as a symbolical terms will have the same signification as in the former trumpet, and mean corrupt, infernal, destructive doctrines,* a grievous

* Ch. viii. p. 152.

judgment or calamity; and *brimstone* will refer to the peculiar kind of weapons that were for the first time used in the fatal struggle: and successfully used; for by “these three” was Constantinople taken, the horrors of destructive invasions let loose upon the remaining part of the Eastern Empire;—and the infernal religion of Mahometanism there established on the ruins of Christianity.

On the sixth of April, 1453, Mahomet planted his standard before the gate of St. Romanus, and formed the memorable siege of the devoted city; and the attention of all Europe and the world was fixed with the most intense interest upon the result. After a siege of fifty-two days, on the 27th May it was taken! and the capital of the Eastern world, which, for so many centuries, “had defied the power of Chosroes, the Chagan, and the Caliphs, was irremediably subdued by the arms of Mahomet the Second.” The emperor, the last of above a thousand years’ succession of the Byzantine Cæsars, was killed in its defence. The Turks entered the city, howling more horribly than beasts of prey. They slew, without the least remorse, and without the least respect to dignity, age, or sex, the defenceless inhabitants. The whole Turkish army had permission for three days to massacre, to violate, and to pillage without restraint. Senators were linked with their slaves; the prelates with the porters of the church; and young men of a plebeian class, with noble maids, whose faces had been invisible to the sun and their nearest kindred. In this common captivity the ranks of society were

confounded ; the ties of nature were cut asunder ; and the inexorable soldier was careless of the father's groans, the tears of the mother, and the lamentations of the children.* No tongue can describe the misery caused by some hundreds of thousands of merciless beings, thus satiating their avarice, lust, and cruelty, for three long days and nights. The Sultan, it is said, heard their cries in his camp, and they lulled him to sleep : the dogs ran into the fields howling with terror, or leaped into the sea.

This great and sad event is thus beautifully noticed by Mr. Hallam. " Before Mahomet the Second planted his cannon against the walls of Constantinople, he had completed every smaller conquest, and deprived the expiring empire of every hope of succour or delay. It was necessary that Constantinople should fall, but the magnanimous resignation of her emperor bestows an honour upon her fall which her prosperity seldom earned. The long deferred but inevitable moment arrived, and the last of the Cæsars folded round him the imperial mantle, and remembered the name which he represented, in the dignity of heroic death. It is thus that the intellectual principle, when enfeebled by disease or age, is said to rally its energies in the presence of death, and pour the radiance of unclouded reason around the struggles of dissolution."† It is thus—to carry the idea to its highest limit and most correct bearing—it is thus that the principle of Christian faith

* Gibbon.

† On the Middle Ages, Vol. II. p. 193.

oftentimes, when the body is enfeebled by disease or age, rallies its energies in the presence of death, and the radiance of unclouded bliss shines around the struggles of dissolution.

“For the power of the horses is in their tails, for their tails are like serpents having heads, and with them they injure.” (ver. 19.)

In the fifth trumpet, the locusts, or Saracens, which they represent, are said to wound with their tails only;* here the horses, or the Turks which they typify, wound both with the mouth and with the tail. The great work being executed, for which the Turkish armies had been loosed and prepared in the overwhelming destruction of Constantinople, whose fortifications, which had stood for so many ages against hostile violence, had now been dismantled and overthrown by Ottoman cannon, we are next told, that not only was her empire thus subverted, but that “her religion was trampled in the dust by the Moslem conquerors.”† Before the final departure of the former woe, the poisonous spirit of the Saracens had been imbibed by those who were appointed by God to succeed them in bringing about the infliction of the miseries of the sixth trumpet.

“The first of the Seljukian sultans was conspicuous for his zeal and faith; and the whole body of the Turkish nation embraced with fervour and sincerity the religion of Mahomet:”‡ and thus, in like

* See ch. viii.

† Gibbon, ch. lvii.

‡ Bishop Newton.

manner, was their power in their tails : thus, in like manner, did they not only injure, or hurt with their mouth—their lion’s mouth, out of which issued fire, and smoke, and brimstone ; but they most grievously oppressed by their religion. And this, it is well known, the Turks have done in an equal degree with the Saracens. “ Many indeed of the Greek church remained, and are still remaining, among them ; but they are made to pay dearly for the exercise of their religion ; are subjected to a capitation tax, which is most rigorously exacted from all above fourteen years of age ; are burthened besides with the most heavy and arbitrary tax upon every occasion ; are compelled to the lowest and most servile drudgery ; are abused in their persons and property ; have not only the mortification of seeing some of their friends and kindred daily apostatize to the ruling religion ; but had even their children taken from them to be educated therein, of whom the most robust and hardy were trained to the soldiery, and the more weakly and delicate were castrated for the Seraglio.”*

The remaining fragments of the Eastern empire were in due time overrun by the Turks, who, from time to time, spread their devastations and conquests to the very verge of the Latin kingdoms, even to the besieging, on several occasions, of Vienna, the capital of the Western empire. As they were, however,

* Bishop Newton.

in these attempts exceeding their prescribed bounds, they were, at length, finally stopped by Prince Eugene, in the fatal battle of Zenta, on the Teiss, in Hungary, fought A.D. 1697, two hundred and forty-four years after the fall of Constantinople. The results of this conflict were as disastrous to the Mahometan Turkish invaders, in the proportion of numbers killed, as the great battle of Tours had been to those of the Saracens under the former woe;* and it so far broke their power, that, although there have been, from time to time since this period, wars between them and the Western nations, they have generally been to the advantage of the latter. It, in short, confined them in a great measure to their own proper limits; and the peace of Carlowitz, consequent upon it, deprived the Sultans of nearly one half of their possessions in Europe; and from this diminution of territorial sovereignty, the Ottoman empire, which once threatened universal subjugation, ceased to be formidable to Christendom."† Since this time their power has been on the decline; and, "in the present day," to adopt the language of another eminent historian, "we anticipate, with an assurance which none can deem extravagant, the approaching subversion of the Ottoman power, which has long been nodding to its fall, and totters at every blast from the north."‡ This being the opinion, not only of Mr. Hallam, but of most intelligent persons,

* Ch. viii. p. 163.

† Cox's History of the House of Austria.

‡ Hallam.

it is not extravagant to believe, that that fall may take place at the termination of the period, as set forth in this prophecy ; and which termination, reckoning 391 years (“ the hour, and the day, and the month, and the year,”) from the fall of Constantinople on the 29th May 1453, will happen in June 1844.

It has been before proved, that the little horn of Mahometanism, in a former prophecy, will be “broken without hand,” *in this same year*, (see Dissertation, chap. xi. pp. 305, 306 ;) in referring to which, I would observe, that all the distinguishing peculiarities which are there predicted of this imposture, have most prominently appeared in the character and principles of the two great people with whose history it is identified, and the outline of which is contained in this and the former chapter ; as well as in its most prominent principles, with those of every other nation and people that have professed it.

“ And the rest of the men who were not killed by these plagues repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship *devils*,* and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood ; which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk : neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.”

The rest of the men who were not killed by these plagues, were the inhabitants of the Western Empire, or the Ten Latin kingdoms,—the Saracenic plague being stopped from being fatal to this part of the

* Dæmonology, or the worship of departed saints, or beings made into Romish Saints, &c. &c.

Roman Empire, by the victory of Charles Martel ; and the Turkish plague by the heroism of Prince Eugene. Of these “men,” (in the number of which, we as a nation are included,) it is here expressly declared, by the unerring voice of Almighty God, that these long and tremendous visitations produced in them no repentance of the *works of their hands*, that they should not worship idols, nor repent of their most wicked and deeply immoral conduct. The nations of the West therefore, *in the eyes of God*, are guilty of idolatry—and idolatry of the most revolting description ; for nothing more strong could be said of the idolatry of Paganism. It matters not what construction is put upon the possession of images or pictures for religious purposes, by those who use them ; it matters not how they gloss over that use by various pretences ; such images and such pictures, *the works of their hands*, for such purposes, they avowedly possess ; and that God who wrote the Second Commandment, which they consistently enough expunge from the Decalogue, calls all their images, represent they what they may—HE calls them *idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see, nor hear, nor walk*. A crime which could thus be denominated by Him who alone is entitled to the homage of His creatures ; a crime which could call for such a notice as this, having evidently a respect to that third *woe* which is yet to be inflicted—that seventh trumpet which is yet to sound—must be a crime of the deepest dye. Like the idolatry of heathenism, both ancient and

modern, men who practise it are given over to a reprobate mind, and trample on the other commands of their Maker. They commit murders, and sorceries, and fornication, and thefts ; and that under the license of their priests. How great the guilt no tongue or language can express ! nor how great will be the punishment ! It is a fearful, most fearful warning ; nor do I see how its force, in its application to the ten Latin or Papal kingdoms, can be evaded. Contrary to the express command of God they continue to make images of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and wood ; contrary to His equally distinct and express commands, they dare His vengeance by granting indulgences and absolutions for the commission of all descriptions of crimes. Thus far it applies not to the Jews, nor to Mahometans, for they are neither of them idolaters. Respecting the latter, Gibbon observes on the subject, that “ the intellectual image of the Deity has never been degraded by any visible idol ! ” It therefore indubitably applies to those men who were not politically killed by the Mahometan plagues or woes, and which, let it be again repeated, are the inhabitants of the ten kingdoms of the Western Roman Empire ; for they alone make images, and bow down thereto.

In this tremendous guilt it is most painful to reflect our own country and dependencies are again fast participating. Well would it be if our rulers would look at these things, and judge of them in the light of the Holy Scriptures, and not through the medium of a mere natural understanding. But the

hope is vain. All that can now be done, is for those that truly fear God to take warning and stand firm,—and instant warning; for this denunciation of the sins and idolatry of the Western nations is as much as to say, that their turn will come, and that on them the next and last woe will fall!

CHAPTER X.

THE

FALL OF THE PAPACY,

IN CONNECTION WITH

THE CEASING OF THE SIXTH TRUMPET ;

AND WITH

THE OPENING OF THE SEVENTH SEAL.

The mention of the second woe being past, deferred—Re-appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ—His description same as in Rev. i., and for what purpose—As the Slain Lamb, and for what end—His opening the seventh seal, or the “little book”—The purpose of His present appearing—The seals and trumpets here unite their histories—The seven thunders—What is to be generally understood by them—Christ’s solemn asseveration—Same as described in Daniel—Import of it explained to signify the end of the Papal power—Awful warning given against this apostacy—History of Redemption as connected with it, finished—To be deeply studied and digested—Different characters in which Christ appears—Observations on the little opened Book, and the prophecies yet to be given.

CHAPTER X.

THE FALL OF THE PAPACY,

IN CONNECTION

WITH THE CEASING OF THE SIXTH TRUMPET.

AFTER the particulars of the first woe trumpet were given, the termination was at once announced in these words, "The first woe is PAST, behold there cometh two more woes hereafter." But the case is very different here; after the particular description of the second woe is concluded, the announcement of its termination is deferred or suspended for near two chapters, in which are related a great variety of events which are to happen before it can be said, "The second woe is past!"

The first thing that arrests our attention is the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ again upon the scene; for the following description, as compared to that in Rev. i. 13—16, can apply to no other.

"And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud, and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet were as pillars of fire." (ch. x. 1.)

As I have above observed, if the symbols in the

first chapter are symbols of the power and deity of Jesus Christ, then must these be also, for they are in substance the same. In the former it is said of His *countenance*, that it was “as the Sun shineth in his strength :” here it is expressed “and his face was as it were the sun.” His *feet* are said, in the first instance, to be “like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace ;” and in the latter, they are said to be “pillars of fire;” whilst His “being clothed with a cloud, and a rainbow upon his head,” are symbols likewise that belong only to God. So that it may be truly said, if the one description represent the “Son of man,” as it is expressly declared it does, so must the other.

On this re-appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ, I would remark, how much it will assist the right understanding of the connecting parts of the various lines of this history, to keep in mind the particular parts performed by the different inhabitants of the heavenly world ; but especially those performed by the Lord Jesus Christ. And I consider this is particularly the case in the present instance, as an attention to it will cast a flood of light upon what has ever been found one of the most difficult parts of the whole prophecy, and which has exceedingly perplexed all commentators.

On looking back, therefore, we find that Christ is brought forward in the first chapter with the sublime attributes of Godhead, as exercising an ever-watchful superintendence over the most minute affairs of His church. He next appears, fulfilling all which con-

cerns that church up to the time of its translation to Heaven ; and the continuance of the Western Empire, in the character of its atoning Sacrifice, as “ the Lamb that had been slain.” And this he is represented as doing, by being said symbolically to open the seven seals of a Book, in which its “fates and fortunes” were contained, and which, in the presence of the whole hierarchy of heaven, He took out of the right hand of God. The space of time which this takes up runs through the various stages of the church’s decay, formed by the respective reigns of Constantine, Theodosius, Justinian, and Charlemagne—through the various scenes of the Reformation—of the French Revolution—and up to what shall be intended by the half-hour’s silence of the seventh seal,—the seventh or inmost roll of the Book ; or more properly, the last of the seven books, and, compared with the former, a “little book.”

On the opening of this little book, and the consequent conclusion of the series of events signified by the seals, the subject is abruptly broken off ; and Christ, as the slain Lamb, having this little opened book in his hand, is left for the present, for the purpose of bringing up the series of events, signified by the trumpets, to this point ! This is now done—the six first trumpets have been sounded ; and just on the instant before the seventh sounds, the character of the slain Lamb is suddenly dropt, and the Saviour appears to perform a different work, and therefore in a different character. He appeared as a “mighty angel *coming down from heaven*, clothed with a cloud, and a

rainbow was upon His head, and His face was as it were the Sun, and His feet were as pillars of fire."

"And He had in His hand a little open book:" or, according to the Greek, "*a little book that had been opened.*" (ver. 2.)

Respecting this, it is well observed by Mr. Gauntlett—"The little book *having been opened*, implies that it must previously have been sealed. It seems therefore to have been a part of the book with seven seals, opened by the lion of the tribe of Judah; or otherwise there must have been two sealed books, which would imply that the original book was imperfect. But this would not comport with its emblematical description, representing it as containing *seven* parts under *seven* seals, the number of perfection, and therefore indicating that it would completely reveal the whole mystery of God."

The two streams of prophecy therefore here unite; and we may therefore from henceforward consider the history of the seven seals as now carried on in the line of the trumpets. It is the same thing as if the intervening six trumpets had been left out; and may be read thus, "And when the Lord Jesus had opened the seventh seal, there was a suspension of action, or an awful pause for a fortnight; immediately after which, clothed with the attributes of Deity, and showing that the contents of the seventh and *last* seal HAD BEEN DISCLOSED,

"He set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot upon the earth, and cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth."

(ver. 3.)

I should consider that this peculiarity of expression was intended to convey the idea, that Christ's *absolute authority and universal dominion* over the world will now, by the events that have just taken place in the translation of the church, and which are about to take place in the ruin of the apostate nations, be no longer questioned! Men appear at present to endeavour to shut out God from the world which He hath made; and, because his patience lasts so long, to think they shall still go on with their own plans. It will at this awful time, however, be made manifest to all the world, that "the Heavens do rule." It may, I think, be well imagined, from the contents of the sixth vial, under which we are confessedly living, in what way that voice will speak thus loudly and thus solemnly! But as neither my object nor my wish is to speculate, I will only repeat, that immediately on the seventh seal being opened, and its half-hour's silence ended, God will, by some tremendous providence, make his voice heard, as the loud roaring of a lion! a mode of expression implying intense anger.*

"And when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices. And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not." (ver. 3, 4.)

Successive claps of thunders portend a storm: the

* Prov. xx. 2; Hosea xi. 10, 11.

number seven, as usual, intimating the perfection of that storm : and I cannot but here call attention to the beautiful analogy which is kept up by this symbol. Connecting it with that part of the prophecy to which it belongs, and to which the little opened book has identified it, it may be read thus : “ After the overturnings and alarms caused by the French revolution—or the opening of the sixth seal, a tremendous hurricane, to be caused as by the extreme violence of the four winds impetuously rushing against each other, is declared to be only suspended or restrained, until ‘the servants of God’ are sealed and preserved. That preservation having taken place, there is then no further let or hindrance, and therefore seven thunders sound, and ‘utter their voices,’ and the storm follows.”

It is evident these thunders will be quickly over, and will cause no interruption in the great chain of events. Most probably we ought to understand, that they signify some remarkable alarms, or loud threatening reports of the approaching ruin ! It is not, as we well know, an uncommon thing, in the prospect of great evils, to say, that we hear the thunder of them in certain ominous actions or signs : and when news of an astounding nature is heard, for us to say, that it came like a clap of thunder. Such would be the effect of the order of Ahasuerus, king of Persia, to Haman, when he ordered him to honour Mordecai. Such in our times was the news of the death of the lamented Princess Charlotte ; and in such a manner is it usual to express the “ *thunders* of the Vatican ! ”

I think, therefore, we ought to consider these seven thunders as something that will give clear, distinct, immediate warning of “the earthquake and great hail”* of the seventh Trumpet! and as fearful warnings, which, like tremendous claps of thunder before a real whirlwind or storm, will cause blackness to gather on every face! and the nations to tremble with guilty fear! The Apostle heard the voices which they uttered—he was informed of their ominous signification, and was about to write: a voice from heaven, however, commanded him to “*write them not!*” One reason for this prohibition may be, that the true church being just removed to heaven, will have no occasion for the information; and another, that the prophecy might probably thereby have been made too plain. It is clear, however, that the command was given to prevent what the “voices uttered” from being known; and hence it is equally clear, that the meaning of those things that have been revealed, was intended to be known.

But the re-appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ is yet to answer another purpose; and this purpose is another link that connects these events with the concluding scenes of Daniel’s prophecies, and with the *present time*.

“And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea, and upon the earth, lifted up his hand to heaven, and sware by Him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven and the things that therein are, and the earth and the things that therein are, and the sea and

• Rev. xi. 19.

the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer. But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he should begin to sound, *the mystery of God should be finished*, as He hath declared unto his servants the prophets." (ver. 5—7.)

If any doubt could have existed respecting this mighty angel being the Lord Jesus Christ, it must be removed by the additional confirmation here afforded; for it is evident, from the description in the first verse, compared with Dan. x. 5, 6, that it is not only the same person, described in ch. i. 13—16, but it is equally evident, from the attitude he assumes, and from the solemn asseveration he makes, that it is the same person who is so prominently brought forward in Daniel's last vision, and which is likewise proved to be Jesus Christ.*

If we would wish to remove the obscurity which hangs over the august scene here described, we must, as far as possible, divest it of metaphor, and explain it in the language and by the light of history, and of the prophecies of the Old Testament. I will therefore contrast the description of Dan. xii. 7, with the one in the above verses.

DANIEL says—

"And I heard the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and sware by Him that liveth for ever and ever, that it SHALL BE for a TIME, TIMES, AND AN HALF."

JOHN says—

"And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea, and upon the earth, lifted up his hand to heaven, and sware by Him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven and the things that therein are, and the earth and things that therein are, and the sea and the things which are therein, that there SHOULD BE TIME NO LONGER."

* See Diss. ch. xii. p. 313, 314.

I have already proved that the first of these asseverations must refer to the vision of the four wild beasts of Daniel, as the place where this chronological term of “time, times, and an half,” is first brought forward, and where therefore its application must be sought for :”* and there need be no hesitation in pronouncing it to signify the duration of the Papal power, for on this point almost all commentators are agreed. I would now express my own conviction, that the asseveration here brought forward relates to the same thing ; the only difference being, that the one expresses this period of 1260 years as FUTURE, “*it shall be* for a time, times, and an half ;” while the other expresses it as past,—“time shall be NO LONGER.”

It is clear that both terms are chronological, and that as surely as the former signifies “it shall be for 1260 years,” so surely does the latter signify, that the 1260 years “shall be no longer,” or are at an end. It cannot indeed signify “time,” in the common acceptation of the word, because the very next verse falsifies such a supposition by alluding to “days” yet to come, “when the seventh angel shall sound.”

This awfully solemn act must therefore be intended to assure us that immediately on the seven thunders ceasing, and just as the seventh trumpet sounds, the mystery of God will be finished, as he hath declared *good tidings* (for that is the idea in the original) to his servants the prophets, and that this anti-Chris-

* See Diss. ch. xiv. p. 377, compared with ch. x. p. 231—254.

tian power, of which such a particular description is given as the little horn, in the seventh chapter of Daniel, will be “NO MORE!” And that this will happen “in the days of the voice of the seventh angel (the third and last woe!) *when he shall BEGIN to sound.*” It will be the first immediate act, according as it is narrated in Daniel, at “the time of the end,” which it was proved is likewise the end of “the time, times, and an half,” shall the king of the South push at him; and the king of the North shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over.”* It is this storm of wrath, of which the seven thunders give such fearful note—and this is the dreadful “woe” which is to follow the sounding of the seventh and last trumpet! Thus is the alarming intimation verified which immediately followed the details of the sixth trumpet, upon “the rest of the men who were not killed by the plagues” of the former woes, and who repented not, and do not still repent “of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and of silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood, which can neither see, nor hear, nor walk: neither do they repent of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts!” Oh! let every one, who has any regard to their present or eternal happiness, attend to the deeply awful warn-

* Diss. ch. xiii. p. 343—352.

ing against this soul-destroying apostacy, which is given in Rev. xiv. 9—12, and which words have a direct reference to the time of persecution which is immediately coming upon us.

The mystery of God, however, in all these at present dark dispensations, will, it is declared, now be “finished,” and the whole scheme of salvation, with the reasons of all the events which at present appear to us so inscrutable, be disclosed. The mystery will be finished! And it deserves attention, that it is called “*the mystery of God* :” and of this I am persuaded, that the more it is unfolded to us, the more we shall see of its deep contrivance, its exact application, and its high design,—the more we shall see of the glorious character of God, of the equity of His government, as well as the sovereignty of his grace: in short the more we see of it—and I imagine the contemplation of it, in connection with the history of redemption, will engage our attention through all eternity—the more we shall see that

“Wisdom through all the mystery shines,
And shines in Jesus’ face ;”

and that it is in all its length, and breadth, and depth, most emphatically **THE MYSTERY OF GOD**.

“And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go, take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth. And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey. And I took the little book out of the hand of the angel, and ate it up. And it was in my mouth sweet as

honey; and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter. And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings." (ch. x. 8—11.)

The first remark I would make on these words is, that the voice which John heard, instructing him respecting the little book *which was open*, was directly from Heaven, and not through the medium of either one of the living creatures, one of the elders, or of an angel. It shews the importance of the communication. *A voice from Heaven* first commanded him (ver. 4) not to write what the seven thunders uttered: it now commands him to take the little opened book from the hands of Christ, and eat it up—that is, to digest well its contents. It appears to signify that the business of it was only to be taken in hand by Him whose kingdom it concerned, and of which it was the immediate prelude. And in this view the change of the character in which he appears is very significant. On opening each of the seven seals, it was in that of a Saviour; of our atoning sacrifice; as that of a Lamb that had been slain, because the events to be typified concerned Him as such. But now that the dispensation closes, and He is about to be known to His church in a different character, not as their priest, but their king, he appears clothed in a style suitable to the action to be performed, and in the grandeur of a Divine person. To make the propriety of this transition familiar to our ideas, as it appears in the every-day occurrences of life, it is only to imagine the greatest man of the present age being called upon to perform

duties in the respective offices which he has sustained, or may now sustain, of a commander of armies, of one of the first peers of the realm, or as chancellor of a university; and to consider, for the performance of each, in what different robes, and in what different state, he would make his appearance.

With regard to the command which was given by this voice from heaven, *to eat up the little book*, it is one that deserves peculiar consideration, from the circumstance that this is the only place in the whole book of Revelation, in which such a thing is particularly directed. In the commencement (ch. i. 3.) it is indeed said, “Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep the things which are written therein;” but this is general. A special command shews that it must have reference to something of a very important nature, and that the contents of the little book were to be well digested, studied, and understood. “Thy words were found,” says the prophet (Jer. xv. 16), “and I did eat them, and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart.” Our Saviour likewise personally uses the same symbolical expression, when He speaks of Himself as “the Bread of Life,” in many passages of the sixth of John. In this manner are we here directed to digest the contents of the seventh seal.

And the occasion of the command is important. It is the point of union of the two great lines of prophecy, like the junction of two mighty rivers just before they empty themselves in the wide ocean.

The opened book represents the *last act* of the Roman Empire under its last head, followed by a “silence in heaven for the space of half an hour.” As it is something in the nature of a solemn pause, happening just previous to the common catastrophe of both series of events, perhaps the idea may be conveyed by considering the immediate event, whatever it be that the *opening* of the book may represent, as something of the nature of a flash of lightning before the seven-fold thunder begins to roll; and that *that series of events ends there!*

It has generally been imagined that the little opened book contained a great many of the prophecies which follow the tenth chapter—the half-hour’s silence not seeming to represent an event of sufficient magnitude to account for the importance attached to it. But this is a gratuitous assumption. It is certain that it marks a prophetic era, representing an equally prominent event in history to any of the other seals, although of an apparently negative character; and that, like them, it will be a hinge on which a new order of things will turn. For instance, if, just previous to the final decisive irretrievable blow being struck, signified by the four winds being let loose, proposals involving all the consequences attending such a catastrophe were to be made to that power which is to be the instrument thereof, no language can express the breathless and anxious suspense, the awful silence which would ensue! This being connected with the last, the only act which the yet-to-be-revived head of the Em-

pire* shall have to perform, would meet all the requirements of the prophecy. I merely throw out this idea to shew the possibility that the symbolical expression of an hour's silence, considering the half hour chronologically, may imply the ceasing from action for a fortnight, and be an event of unutterable importance.

Howsoever sweet or pleasant such a discovery may be in meditation, the consequences, it is declared, will be *bitter*. *As much as to say*, that the effect of this silence will be the most poignant sorrow, and the deepest anguish; *as much as to say*, that it is the immediate forerunner of the overwhelming and final ruin of which the seven thunders give such most fearful warning.

The remaining verse of the chapter, I conceive implies, that although the series of prophecies signified by the seven seals is now completed, nevertheless the same ground, in other connections and other relations, has to be retraced, and that it will involve the "fates and fortunes" of "many people, and nations, and tongues, and kings;" likewise implying that yet before "the second woe" will be pronounced to be *past*, he will have to go back, and prophesy of other events bringing them up to this point of time.

* Rev. xvii.

CHAPTER XI.

THE

TRUE CHURCH OF CHRIST ;

DESCRIBED AS

AN INNER CHURCH WITHIN THE RULING VISIBLE
CHURCH ;

AND

LIKEWISE DESCRIBED UNDER THE SYMBOL OF
TWO WITNESSES.

The symbols taken from Jewish worship—The true church enclosed by the providence of God—The visible church paganized, and here called the Gentiles—To be in possession of what is called the outer court 1260 years—The different terms in which this chronological period is represented, and its use—The two witnesses—What the word signifies—The number two explained — Their depressed condition for 1260 years—Described as two olive trees —Zechariah's prophecy—The Holy Spirit's agency — The two candlesticks—Marvellous power of the two witnesses—Two such witnesses explained to have existed for above 1200 years in such a condition—The Albigenses —The Protestant Churches—High privileges of real believers.

CHAPTER XI.

THE TRUE CHURCH DESCRIBED AS
THE TEMPLE;

AND

AS TWO WITNESSES ; AND ITS DEPRESSED
CONDITION.

WE have not *yet* reached the announcement of *the second woe being past !* Other important disclosures have yet to be made, as connected with that termination, belonging to those future prophecies alluded to at the conclusion of the last chapter ; more especially those which belong to the *internal* history of the church, and which are now brought forward in anticipation, to show their synchronical conclusion with the fall of the Ottoman empire, or with the ceasing of the sixth trumpet.

They commence in the following language :

“ And there was given me a reed, like unto a rod : and the angel stood, saying, Arise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. But the court which is without the temple, leave out, and measure it not : for it is given unto the Gentiles ; and the Holy City shall they tread under foot, forty and two months.” (Rev. xi. 1, 2.)

The symbols here employed, are again taken from the visible objects of Jewish worship : the temple of God—the altar—the outer court—and the Holy city ; and they are applied to the spiritual worship of the Christian dispensation. The temple of God, thus used, is intended to designate any place where God abides by the indwelling of His Spirit, as he formerly abode, literally, in the literal temple ; to which temple, as the place where the visible representation and tokens of the Deity were manifested, the Tribes went up to worship. Being a building thus set apart and consecrated to God, honoured with extraordinary marks of divine favour, containing the ark, the repository of His laws ; the Shekinah, or visible cloud ; the Urim and Thummim, and the holy fire, and as the seat of public worship, it is here chosen as the most proper symbol of the whole body of his spiritual worshippers. The apostle Paul, speaking of the saints of God, says, they “are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone ; in whom all building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy *temple* unto the Lord.” Eph. ii., 20, 21 : see likewise 1 Cor. iii. 17, and vi. 19 : also 2 Cor. vi. 16, where it is said, “Ye are the temple of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them.” These collectively constitute the temple which is here signified ; their spiritual worship, the altar ; and every individual member is a true worshipper in that one holy temple.

This temple, this altar, and this people, the

apostle was commanded to measure ; and the means of doing so were afforded by a measuring rod being put into his hands. By this act it is to be understood that they were to be enclosed by the peculiar providence of God, and secured as his peculiar inheritance and care. The expression, as understood in other places,* involves the idea of separation, implying that a very broad mark of distinction would exist between them and the merely professing church. Hence, in this command, which it is to be noticed is a command from Jesus Christ, “the angel,” *the mighty angel* of the former chapter, directs the apostle to take no account of the *outer court*, but to “cast it out, and measure it not.” The outer court of the Jewish temple is that which was denominated *the court of the Gentiles*, because the Gentile proselytes of the gate, as they were called, were allowed only to worship within the precincts of that court, while they were altogether excluded from entering into the *inner court*, which was allotted to the genuine Israelites. We are therefore here given to understand, that the *visible* professing church, throughout the Western Roman empire, for a certain period mentioned, was to be to the true Christian church what the pagan Gentiles of old had been to the Jewish church. The plain meaning of which is, that they should have so far relapsed from the simplicity of the Gospel, as to resemble the ancient idolatry of the heathen ; and they have done

* Ez. xl., xliii. 10, xlvii. 8. Hab. iii. 6. Zech. ii.

so, and still do so. The fact is indeed so palpable, that even Gibbon, although he could neither see nor understand the real temple, or altar, or people of God ; yet he could see the true character of the outward visible church. “The Christians of the seventh century,” he says, “had insensibly relapsed into a semblance of paganism ; their public and private vows were addressed to the relics and images that disgraced the temples of the East : the throne of the Almighty was darkened by a cloud of martyrs, and saints, and angels, the objects of popular veneration ; and the Corryridian heretics, who flourished in the fruitful soil of Arabia, invested the Virgin Mary with the name and honours of a goddess.”*

All this is in exact accordance with the lamentable and corrupt state into which the outward church was described to be gradually brought, as explained in the four first seals. And further, the time which is here assigned to its duration is in equally exact accordance with the time which, in Daniel’s vision of the great wild beasts, is assigned to the duration of the papal little horn,—“forty and two months ;” making, as before explained, according to the Jewish mode of reckoning, thirty days to a month, 1260 prophetic days, or 1260 literal years. From whence it follows, that these paganized Christians were those nations and peoples who acknowledged the papacy ; and that the holy city, which for this long period of time they trampled upon, is the terri-

* Gibbon. ch. l.

torial platform of that part of the professing Christian church which is subject to their tyranny and apostacy.

A different chronological term than that used by Daniel, is here brought forward to express the same period of time, for the purpose of keeping the various aspects, under which popery is introduced, clear and distinct. These aspects may be considered as three-fold. The first exhibits popery as it appears under the actual dominion of its ecclesiastical head ; and its duration of 1260 years is expressed by the term *time, times, and an half*, or three times and an half. The second aspect, and the one now under review, exhibits its operations as it appears under the secular tyrannical dominion of the ten Western nations, which are, in consequence, called the ten papal kingdoms ; and the same duration is expressed, as above explained, by the term *forty and two months*. The third aspect, which we have not yet considered, but which will immediately come under notice, is popery as it appears in the depressed condition of the true church of Christ ; that church, whose narrow bounds, during this long period, we have just contemplated as being confined within the temple and its inner court. In this connection, the same duration is expressed in the still increasingly plain chronological term of *one thousand two hundred and three score days*. Thus we see that the same duration of the same period, being expressed in three different ways, is not without the most important meaning, as we should certainly suppose would be the case. The

papal world, in short, may be said to be divided into three classes of persons; first, the pope and his clergy; second, those who obey them, called here "the Gentiles;" and third, those who do not obey them, but are hated and persecuted by them. These are kept separate, and identified, throughout this prophecy, by the above respective chronological terms. In like manner, the termination of the imposture of Mahomet is characterized as *the time of the end*.* Thus, wherever we meet with these respective modes of expression, by keeping their distinctive application in view, we discover at once to what they belong. In the present case the introduction of the term forty and two months, not only settles the time that the popish pagan nations shall tread under foot, and cast ignominy upon, every thing that is lovely and excellent in the Christian name; but it likewise informs us (these 42 months being thus identical with the duration of popery,) that its termination shall be at the same time, and consequently that this likewise shall be one of the concluding scenes attendant on the ceasing of the sixth trumpet, or the second woe.

We now proceed to the next verses, in which we shall find that the imagery is not only still taken from Jewish worship, but that, with strict decorum to the subject, it is borrowed from that which has immediately preceded it, viz., the Temple at Jerusalem.

* See ch. xi. p. 305.

And not only so, but we shall find that, for the purpose of more beautiful and forcible illustration, the Holy Ghost likewise borrows emblems from Jewish or Old Testament HISTORY.

“ And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and three score days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees and the two candlesticks, standing before the God of the earth. And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed. These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.” (ch. xi. 3—6.)

The true worshippers, mentioned in the two preceding verses as constituting the temple of God, and whose worship is His altar,—and who are further described as being separated by a broad mark of distinction from the idolatrous nations under whose government they are subject,—are likewise described as being circumscribed within very narrow bounds. The whole of what is called Christendom, denominated here the Holy City, and the outer court, is said to be given to the Gentiles, or paganized Christians, who in consequence form the visible professing church, and trample everything really sacred and holy under their feet. Nevertheless, though this is the state of things that was to exist, and that for the long period of twelve hundred and sixty years, or 42 prophetic months, yet in the verses now under consideration we have very particular and distinct infor-

mation given, that these true worshippers (for to them alone can be the reference, as the repetition of the same duration, and that in a still plainer chronological term, proves,) shall likewise be the LORD'S WITNESSES in the earth.

We are too apt, in studying and reading commentaries and interpretations of the prophetic word, to consider them as subjects of a speculative rather than of a practical and personal nature; and to no part perhaps does the observation apply with more force than that which is now under consideration: while at the same time there is none that ought to come more home to every bosom, and to every heart. For whilst it should be the concern of every one to know that he is a part of that one holy, spiritual, living Temple above described, it should equally be his most anxious point of inquiry, Do I bear witness and give testimony for God? Witness in Greek is *Martys*, or Martyr, and signifies one that gives testimony to the truth at the expence of his life. In this sense, Paul says, 1 Tim. vi. 13, that Christ witnessed a good confession before Pontius Pilate.

In this place, therefore, the expression implies not only those who, during the reign of the tyrannical Papal kings and rulers, should keep themselves from the abounding corruptions and idolatry, but those who should testify to the truth; condemn the wickedness and idolatry around them; and give warning of God's awful denunciations against the apostacy. It implies something more than neutrality; more than standing by and suffering the honour and majesty of

God, and the place of his sanctuary, to be trampled upon with impunity.

The witnesses are said to be two, because two witnesses *at least* were required under the Jewish law for confirmation; one witness only was not sufficient.* At the same time, from merely two being mentioned, it shows, that though the number should be sufficient, it should be the least possible—it should be very small. It follows therefore that this number is symbolical, and signifies, that during the whole of the twelve hundred and sixty years the Lord would raise up a succession of sufficient witnesses to His truth, and to His great name; but that that number would be comparatively small.

It is added, however, that these honoured witnesses—for the Lord to call them *His* witnesses is a greater honour than all the world can give—were throughout all this long period “to prophesy;” that is, to bear their testimony, or to preach, making a public assertion of their faith. The phrase does not mean predicting future events, a faculty which the Christian church has never claimed during this period; but it simply means a faithful and uncompromising avowal, in the face of opposition, both by our profession and conduct, of the distinguishing doctrines of the Gospel; and in this sense every believer prophesies, and is a witness for Christ.

And they were to prophesy, *clothed in sackcloth*, which is the scriptural emblem of sorrow and trouble:

* Deut. xvii. 6 ; xix. 15.

to prophesy in sackcloth therefore means, to bear our testimony in a sorrowful, mournful, and depressed condition. In Psalm xxx. 11, it is directly opposed to a state of gladness; “thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness.” Not that it requires us to suppose the witnesses should always be in a state of absolute persecution—“Sometimes the sword of open violence might be drawn, and sometimes it might be sheathed: but still they should be locally so situated, as inevitably to exercise their ministry in a depressed condition, slighted and despised and discouraged, when not absolutely attacked and worried, by the governing powers.”*

These two witnesses are further symbolically described as “the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.” One purpose for which this imagery is employed unquestionably is to teach us that we are to look for the two witnesses in the temple: that temple, the outer court and holy city of which are trodden down of the Gentiles; and of which the olive trees and candlesticks are considered a part of the furniture. The allusion is to those two olive trees which the prophet Zechariah saw on each side of the golden candlestick, and supplying the light thereof with oil.† On his inquiry what they meant, the angel gave an answer that not only points them out as the type of the two witnesses, but most strikingly expresses what a holy and sacred radiance is thrown around the characters

* Faber.

† Zech. ch. iv.

and persons of those who bear a testimony for Christ. The whole passage is so beautiful, that I cannot resist transcribing it—indeed the whole chapter calls for the deepest attention. “Then answered I, and said unto him,” the prophet goes on to say, “What are these two olive trees upon the right side of the candlestick, and upon the left side thereof? And I answered again, and said unto him, What be these two olive branches which through the two golden pipes empty the golden oil out of themselves? And he answered me and said, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my Lord. Then said he, THESE ARE THE TWO ANOINTED ONES that stand by the Lord of the whole earth.”*

Here it is plainly intimated that the Witnesses are the anointed, or chosen servants of God, replenished with gifts and graces from the Holy Spirit, as an olive tree is with oil. Hence they are said, as the effects of this anointing, to have an unction from the Holy One, and to know all things.† And it is in this that their strength lies; it is in this supply of oil from olive trees planted in the temple of God, that they branch out as lights from the golden candlesticks, and are enabled to bear their life-giving testimony for the name of Jesus seen and read of all men. Accordingly, still in the 4th of Zechariah, when the question in another place, verse 4th, is asked respecting them, an answer to the same effect is given, that it is “not by might, nor by power, BUT BY MY SPIRIT, saith

* Zech. iv. 11—14.

† 1 John ii. 20, 27.

the Lord of hosts." And because it is through the gracious influences of the Spirit that might, and power, and strength, as well as gifts and graces, are communicated; therefore is the whole glory ascribed to sovereign triumphant grace. For it is immediately added, "and he shall bring forth the head stone thereof, with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it." *

Here then we have the doctrine of the Holy Spirit distinctly and unequivocally preached unto us, as being the secret source and spring of all our strength and power, as well as that of the church's, through every successive age. It is the vital, never-failing, and abundant influences of grace, thus flowing, that these earthen vessels, polluted and defiled by sin as they are, have been made the temple of the Living God, and that his people have been honoured as His Witnesses on the earth, "Not by might nor by power, but my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts"—"I, saith the Lord, I will give power unto my two witnesses." It is well therefore for us to keep in mind where our strength lieth—to feel that *we* are nothing—and that the excellency of the power is of God, and not of us. It is the more important to do this, and to live upon it, from the certain fact, as will shortly appear in the consideration of the remaining part of this prophecy, that we shall soon have greater occasion for it than was perhaps ever before experienced.

* Zech. iv. 6, 7.

It will be then well indeed to know where our strength lies, and how it will be communicated.

The two candlesticks, or lamp-bearers, signify the churches,* through which the light of the Gospel is supported or seen; and through the various branches of which “the golden oil” empties itself. The expression, that they stand before the God of the earth—which same expression, as above quoted, is used by Zechariah†—signifies that they constantly minister unto him; and, like the angels who stand before him, await, receive, and obey, as His servants, His high commands.‡ And we should recollect that it is of *us* this is spoken; that this is the attitude in which *we* should be found, and at all times be found, ready and swift to do His will.

Having thus described who and what these witnesses are—the source of their strength—their depressed condition, and the time of its continuance, the two next verses speak of their marvellous power.§ Here the symbols are chiefly brought from Jewish history, and appear to refer to the times of Moses and Elijah, with the spirit and power of which eminent servants of God they are described to be endowed. In treating of this part of the prophecy, I will now come to its application or fulfilment as a subject of history; and explain—

FIRST, that during the whole reign of the Papal

* Rev. i. 20.

† Rev. viii. 2.

‡ Zech. iv. 14.

§ Rev. viii. 4, 5.

kings the Lord *has* had his witnesses, who in the face of opposition *have* borne testimony to the truth, and that in a depressed condition: and further, that these witnesses have existed as churches, shedding a heavenly light around them.

Viewing the number *two* as symbolical, I do not consider that any particular churches are here intended to the exclusion of others. The explanation which I have offered, takes in every separate church, and likewise every individual believer; for all in their various spheres have been and are witnesses for God, and all I believe are, here included. Some have given a brighter light, some a fainter one; nevertheless all have given light; and all have borne some testimony, however feeble, to the truth of the Gospel.

And it is a fact which Ecclesiastical history verifies—and the reader is referred particularly to Milner's History of the Church for its more full confirmation—that this prophecy has been fully accomplished in the Lord never having left himself without these his witnesses. Even in the darkest days of Popery, in the meridian of this 1260 years' decreed apostacy, there have been shining witnesses, both without and even within its pale. Of the first description were the churches of the Albigenses and Waldenses in the valleys of Piedmont and the south of France. Their rise is very conclusively and satisfactorily proved, by Mr. Faber, to be from a very remote period of Christian history. He says, that “when the Emperor Constantine, in the days of Pope Sylvester, corrupted

the church by the magnitude of his donations, one of the companions of that prelate, anticipating the apostacy of which he then beheld the commencement, withdrew himself from the communion of the Roman pontiff. He was joined by several persons who held the same primitive sentiment as himself, and who wished to preserve unspotted the purity of the early church. These pious men henceforward formed a separate society, out of which sprang the two churches, of the Vallenses in Piedmont, and of the Albigenses in France. In a state of voluntary poverty and depression, their object was to preserve the simplicity of the apostolic faith ; and the constant doctrine, both of themselves and of their successors, was, “ that the true church of Christ no longer existed in the persons of Pope Sylvester and his adherents ; but from his time, or from the earlier part of the fourth century, the genuine succession of the sincere church, against which Christ had promised the gates of hell should never prevail, had been preserved only among themselves.” These churches, ever since the rise of Popery, have witnessed even unto death ; and from them, even before the Reformation, issued many other churches, although perhaps none so pure, in the neighbouring nations of Hungary, Bohemia, and Germany.

These were without the pale of the apostate church : but it is likewise a matter of fact, that another such church, worshipping God in much truth and simplicity, has likewise existed of a totally different complexion ; enriched in an equal degree with vitality,

and shedding its bright and heavenly light on the surrounding darkness. This spiritual church was contained within the pale of the church of Rome, composed of members of its communion—of men who were raised up from time to time to make a stand against and expose its corruptions, and who have left a good evidence of having held the faith in uprightness. Of such a church was the celebrated Bernard ; Claude, Bishop of Turin ; Bradwardine and Grosse-teste, Bishops in England ; and many others, who are brought forward by Bishop Newton, Milner, and other authors.

It is impossible to say to what extent the ministry and example of such men may have been a blessing to the paganizing Christians around them ; or how great the numbers of believers of such a church there may have been. Amidst the universal apostacy that prevailed, they are as difficult to discover, and particularly in the imperfect records of the history of the middle ages, as were the seven thousand in Israel in the time of Elijah, who had not bowed the knee to Baal. The Waldenses themselves confessed that there were some “individual souls in Babylon,” who loved the Lord, and served him with all their spirit, under all the disadvantages by which they were surrounded. “In the darkest periods of Popery,” says Bishop Newton, “like lights in a dark place, who remonstrated against the degeneracy and superstition of the times”—“some superior spirits to bear testimony against it, and stem the torrents of superstition.” And Gibbon, so often the unconscious and

unintentional witness to the fulfilment of prophecy, speaks to the same purpose. After naming the persecutions of the Albigenses—or, as he terms them, Albigeois—he says, “In the state, in the church, and even in the cloister, a latent succession was preserved of the disciples of St. Paul, who protested against the tyranny of Rome, embraced the Bible as the rule of faith, and purified their creed from all the visions of the Gnostic theology. The struggles of Wickliffe in England, of Huss in Bohemia, were premature and ineffectual; but the names of Zuinglius, Luther, and Calvin, are pronounced with gratitude as the deliverers of nations.”*

Since the Reformation, the Lord’s witnesses have chiefly, perhaps altogether, been found in the Protestant churches, in which a succession of holy and devoted men, witnessing against the abominations by which they have been surrounded, have from time to time been raised up, and have shed a bright lustre on the annals of the Christian church. Compared with former ages it has truly been a glorious period; but looking at it merely in connection with the more immediate papal nations, it has been but as it were the twilight, “a little help,” as it is elsewhere called.† The outer court, the holy city, has still, to a great and now increasing extent, been trodden under foot by the Papists. Out of the ten Roman kingdoms, only England, since the Reformation, was truly Protestant. Austria, France, Spain, Portugal, Sardinia,

* Gibbon, ch. liv.

† Diss ch. xii. 326.

Naples, and the Papal States, have ever continued in the main in their apostate state, crushing every attempt at reformation. Each of these countries nevertheless has had its witnesses ; but as the voice of history, even to the present moment proves, witnesses prophesying in deep sackcloth.

We now come to speak—

SECONDLY, of *the power* ascribed to the Lord's witnesses, as detailed in the 5th and 6th verses. The symbols are taken in this instance, that we may be enabled to bring them more home to ourselves, not from Jewish worship but from Jewish history, or from the Lord's dispensation towards His people of old ; and are chiefly found in the account given of Moses and Aaron, and of Elijah and Elisha.* What God does, according to His word, either miraculously, as he did by His ancient servants the prophets, or, since the ceasing of miracles, what He does in the way of His providence in their behalf, especially in reference to the persecutions which they endure, is said to be done *by them*. "Behold," says God to the prophet Jeremiah, (ch. i. 9, 10,) "I have put my words in thy mouth: see I have this day set thee over the nations, and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and throw down, to build and to plant."† And in Hosea vi. 5, the same idea is conveyed, "Therefore have I hewed them by

* Ex. vii. 17 ; 1 Kings xvii. 1 ; xviii. 41.

† See likewise Jer. v. 12, 14.

the prophets ; I have slain them by the words of my mouth." Thus, to whom God in any remarkable way vindicates the injured honour of His servants, when He steps out of the common way of His providence for their protection and benefit, the highly metaphorical language here used, expressive of their power, is fulfilled. It is language which, though more direct, is not stronger than that which runs throughout the whole of the Scriptures, in speaking on the same subject. If in this place the elements both of fire, and air, and water, and land, are described to be at their command ; in another place it is said, "All things are yours ; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come ; all are yours ; and ye are Christ's ; and Christ is God's,"* beyond which language cannot go !

It is a common expression, that the Lord's people live far below their privileges ! How few indeed recognize the great things which are here described, and described as identifying *them* ; and how little their enemies know what they are doing when they injure them. The whole scope of the Scriptures, as it bears upon this part of a Christian's experience, confirms this assurance of their unbounded power—a power to which God himself puts no limit. And what, though it be silent in its operations, though it be lodged in the hands of God, who says, "vengeance is mine, I will repay," yet it is still not the

* 1 Cor. iii. 21—23.

less real. Both in the light of Scripture and of providence we see much, but we wait for the day of Judgment to reveal how many of the evils, calamities, and trials which have attended mankind, both collectively and individually, have been caused by their neglect and injurious treatment of the Lord's servants. In reference to some of the most calamitous events that ever fell on nations, and which will come before us in the consideration of the after parts of this book, this reason is expressly given: "They have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink."*

The language here used therefore is no hyperbole: the people of God have in all ages had the power ascribed to them, and they still possess it. Not indeed, be it remembered, by their own might or their own power, but by the Spirit of God—His spirit as speaking and breathing through His own word. With this Divine Word, as with the sword of the Spirit,† may we all be armed for the dreadful conflict now so near at hand, and which calls for our next attention.

* Rev. xvi. 6.

† Eph. vi. 17.

CHAPTER XII.

THE LAST GREAT PERSECUTION;

OR

A CONTINUATION OF THE CONCLUDING SCENES OF THE SIXTH TRUMPET.

This event noticed by Daniel—Likewise in Rev. vii., as the great Tribulation—Here it is particularized—In the Time when it will commence; when the 1260 years are finishing—Its Instrumentality, the beast of the bottomless pit, or by infidels—Its actings developed in the French revolution—The reign of terror—Its present existence shown—Its war with the Lord's witnesses, or persecution of His church—Our strength to endure it from God—Its locality, or the place where it will happen—Considered to be England—Why compared to Sodom—to Egypt—to Jerusalem—The time it is to last, three years and a half—What is meant by the death of the witnesses—This time an incomplete period—To what the other half has a reference—The great rejoicing it will occasion, and the reason thereof.

CHAPTER XII.

THE LAST GREAT PERSECUTION.

I HAVE thought it right, with regard to the great and deeply interesting event of which the particulars are symbolically detailed in the above four verses, to make it the subject of a separate chapter. My chief reason for doing this, is, because it appears capable of the clearest demonstration, that it speaks of a tragedy near at hand; of a tragedy in which the people of the present generation will very shortly be either the dreadful actors or the unhappy victims, and, therefore, because it is to us so indescribably important.

It was hinted at in general terms, in considering the latter part of Daniel's "Great Vision,"* where it is intimated that at the "*time of the end* many shall be purified, and made white, and tried;" and that "the wicked shall do wickedly."† It has likewise been pointed at in a very striking manner, in considering the seventh chapter of the Revelation

* See Diss. ch. xii. 327 ; xiv. 378.

† Dan. xii. 9, 10.

where it is called THE GREAT TRIBULATION, out of which the whole rescued church is said to have come from “all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues.” In both these notices, brief as they are, there is enough to satisfy us that something of a very dreadful nature, regarding the peace and happiness of the church of Christ, will take place. To be purified, made white, and tried, and that through the wicked doings of the wicked; likewise to be rescued from a superlatively great tribulation, in which the servants of God shall have hungered and thirsted, and been grievously tormented—might prepare us to expect the worst that could happen. We have now, in the prophecy before us, very full particulars, even both as to the time when this persecution will commence; by what instrumentality; its duration; what will be its nature; its locality; its consequences; and its issue: in the study of which particulars we shall find that the worst *will* happen, and very soon happen; but that *the best, the very best*, will immediately follow.

FIRST. The time it will commence is thus expressed: “And when they shall be finishing their testimony,” that is, at the time when the 1260 years of the Lord’s witnesses are *concluding*. In our translation the words are “And when they shall *have finished* their testimony;” but the most eminent commentators, including the names of Mede, Whiston, Cressneer, Newton, Halifax, Woodhouse, Cuninghame, Bicheno, Gauntlett, Dr. Moore, and

others, all agree to render it according to the first translation, *when they shall be about to finish their testimony, or when they shall be finishing their testimony.* Even Mr. Faber, in the first edition of his valuable work on prophecy—which I consider, on many disputed points, far more correct, and less warped by system than the subsequent one, gives it, “And when they shall *draw near the close* of their testimony.”* And it cannot be otherwise ; because the whole tribulation is described to be over, and the Lord’s witnesses finally and triumphantly rescued, before it is said, “the second woe is past ;” and consequently before it can be said the 1260 years are past. Therefore it must happen according to the original Greek text, when they shall *be finishing* their testimony, and not *after they have finished it* ; for that is impossible. For before the seventh seal is opened, consequently before the mighty angel appears with the little opened book, it is said their sufferings are at an end, “they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat, because the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters ; and God shall *wipe away all tears from their eyes.*”† In fact, if this were not the case, they would be in sackcloth, or in a state of mourning, depression, and sorrow, after the 1260 years were past ; but it is to be for this length of time, and *no longer* ; therefore this

* Faber’s Dis. Vol. II. p. 91. Ed. 1808. † Rev. vii. 16, 17.

event must form the concluding scene, while the witnesses *are finishing* their testimony; that is, it will be the last act of the drama.

SECOND. The instrumentality by which this persecution will be effected.

“*The Beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit, shall make war against them.*” (ver. 7.)

This is the first mention of a beast in the book of Revelation. It is a symbol taken from Daniel, signifying a cruel and tyrannical power, ruling by the impulse of natural brutish passions, and persecuting the church of God.* By its first appearance here, we are to understand that some such new power or domination will at this time appear to perform the assigned work, rising, not like the four beasts of Daniel, from the strivings of the great sea, or a troublesome state of affairs, or from great commotions, but from the “bottomless pit;” from Satanic depths, from HELL, as this expression has elsewhere been explained to signify.† I wonder not that former commentators have been at a loss what to understand by the beast so described. Natural reason could never have imagined a distinct determinate power arising in the world, the principles of which should be so utterly diabolical, that it should be characterized as being direct from the abode of the devils. The doctrines of Mahomet are indeed

* See Diss. ch. ix. p. 204.

† Ch. vi. p. 7.

described as a smoke from the bottomless pit,"* in reference to which, it is said, "it cast the truth down to the ground, and practised and prospered;"† and we might naturally infer that *a beast* from the bottomless pit will have something of the same general character.

It was the opinion of an author, who wrote a paraphrase on the Revelation, considerably above a hundred years ago, that "from the reduplication of the article in the Greek, it may be inferred that the beast was become notorious and famous;"‡ that is, from its being expressed as "THE beast out of the bottomless pit," it was a power already known by its actings, but nevertheless one that had not performed the part which is here assigned to it, in persecuting the church.

It is not presuming on the credulity of any one to say, that such a state of things is exactly that in which we live at the present moment. At the commencement of the great French revolution, a power broke loose upon the world, answering, both in its principles and actings, this description. The former were those of perfect undisguised Atheism, shewn in every possible contempt and desecration of the Holy Scriptures, by the then government of that unhappy nation.§ The history of this period, it is presumed, in this particular, is not sufficiently

* Ch. vi. p. 7.

† Waple.

‡ Ch. ix. p. 12.

§ Diss. ch. vi. p. 128.

known, as the works which minutely described the atrocious proceedings that took place at that time, have most of them sunk into comparative oblivion. It may here be briefly noticed, that Atheism received the public homage due to God ; that the Scriptures were declared to be a fable, and death an eternal sleep ; and that upon the altar of the church at Notre Dame, the naked person of a prostitute was worshipped as the goddess of reason. The Bible was publicly dragged through the streets, consigned to the flames, and on every possible occasion treated with marked ignominy. In the mad frenzy of the moment the Sabbath was abolished ; the division of the year by weeks was done away with ; and time was counted from the first year of the revolution : in fact, every thing was done that could be thought of, to obliterate the memory of both creation and redemption !

These principles from the bottomless pit, were dominant from about the middle of May, 1793, to the end of 1796 ; and they shewed themselves by corresponding fruits—for scenes of horror as the world never before beheld were transacted during this awful period ; so much so, that it seemed as if hell itself were let loose. It is sufficient to mention the names of Robespierre, Danton, Marat, and their associates, for those at all conversant with the history of the times to recall the extremities of guilt, horror, and blasphemy, which were, in such perfection, for the first time exhibited on the stage of human existence.

“THE beast that ascendeth from the bottomless pit,” is, therefore, already “notorious and famous.” We are not left merely to conjecture what kind of a power and dominancy it is into whose hands the churches of Christ are decreed so soon to fall. The complete specimen, in all its parts, principles, and effects, has been given ; and we are able to comprehend, in some measure, not only of what nature the persecution, directed against the devoted servants of God, arising from such a quarter, will be ; but likewise, from its strangeness and superior horror to all former ones ; and being permitted to be Satan’s last attempt against the church of Christ before its final rescue, why it is made the subject of a distinct and particular prophecy.

The question then arises, if these diabolical principles are to rule and again predominate in so short a time, spending their terrific violence in an especial manner against the religion of Jesus Christ, are there any indications to countenance such an expectation, and to warn us of the approach of so formidable an enemy ? The answer is by no means dubious : the exposure lately made by the Bishop of Exeter in the House of Lords—the Times newspaper, and other periodicals and pamphlets, repeatedly pressing upon our minds the same facts—and the open and unblushing language of the infidel press, equalling any thing that ever issued from the pen of Voltaire or Paine,—prove that these principles are at work, subverting the very foundations of society in all their unmitigated atrocity, throughout the length

and breadth of the empire. At the same time the outbreak, lately made in South Wales, exhibited but too clearly, according to the evidence given on the trials of the prisoners, that this rebellion was but the premature putting forward of the head of the monster. That a conspiracy exists for the establishment of an atheistical state of society, appears beyond a question ; and looking at the supineness with which it is regarded in high quarters, looking at the strength it has already acquired, and looking at the very similar state of things just before the breaking out of the French Revolution fifty years ago, it is too much for the most indifferent to say it may not succeed.

Here then in connection with the fall of the Ottoman empire, to which it is the immediate prelude, we have another sign of the times, in addition to those already named.* The stoutest heart cannot say there is nothing to apprehend ; for the fact being certain and admitted, that the very same principles are abroad and rampant in society, which, in our own recollection, involved a great nation in one mass of ruin, crime, and misery, we have no security that the same thing may not again happen. And when we further see that the professed end of the “ new moral world,” which the Socialists profess to organize, is the subversion of religion and its dearest ties, and that this object is that which it is here decreed they shall effect, indifference is sin.

The beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit, it is said,

THIRDLY, "Shall make war against them (the Lord's witnesses) and overcome them and kill them." (ch. xi. 7.)

How different is the prospect here held out to the churches of Christ, to that in which they are themselves indulging! How different from the language held at public meetings, and in the generality of pulpits! The advice of the apostle is, "Despise not prophesyings,"* but are they not despised by a great portion of the professing church? If it were not so, would they be crying "peace, peace," when the sure word of prophecy, to which God says we do well to take heed,† points us to the darkest season of sorrow that they ever yet experienced? The war here spoken of, it will be found, is no spiritual war—the power signified by the beast, no spiritual enemy—the death, no spiritual affliction! To say the least of it, there is, without going very deep into the study of the subject, quite enough to alarm, and quite enough to authorize every minister of Jesus to sound the solemn word of warning.

Nothing can be clearer than that this fearful catastrophe is to befall the churches just on the conclusion of the sixth trumpet, or the second woe; and if there be one probability greater than another in the world of politics, it is, that what is signified by that trumpet will soon end!‡

* 1 Thess. v. 20.

† 2 Pet. i. 19.

‡ Diss. ch. vi. pp. 136—141; also ch. xi. pp. 301—305; and in this Work, ch. ix. p. 194, and onwards.

“ I do not pretend to determine,” says an eminent minister, “ the times and the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power ; or to decide how far these things will happen in our own times. I am speaking the words of *warning* : I hope and pray they may not prove the words of prophecy. But of this I am fully persuaded, that the Scriptures clearly point out a darker season of trial and persecution coming upon the church than hath ever yet been, and accompanied with a more complete putting down of all faithful preaching. The *two witnesses* I am persuaded have never yet been slain—but slain assuredly they will be ; and then that fearful season will come.”* I know not that much more than this can be said in explanation of this war, and of this death ; with our loins girt and our lamps burning, we must wait the event to know its full meaning.

In the language of prophecy, according to the definition of Mede, *to die* signifies to cease to be whatever a person was before such death. The death of the witnesses would therefore seem to imply their being compelled to cease from being witnesses. It will, in fact, most probably be a complete political death, in which all the real followers of Jesus Christ will be subdued ; degraded from all power and authority ; deprived of all offices, of all worldly comforts ; and perhaps, in many instances, of life : all their places of public worship shut ; the public

* Thelwall's Sermons, p. 197, A. D. 1833.

profession of religion vilified, degraded, and prohibited; and the Scriptures trampled upon. "It cannot," observes Bishop Horsley, "be an extinction of the spiritual vitality of these churches; of their faith, their love, their works; not an extinction of their light, nor a drying up or failure of the supply of oil. Such a death as this can only be inflicted on a sinful church by the avenging hand of God. The witnesses are to be killed by the beast. And their carcase-state, we may humbly hope, will be nothing worse than a state of extreme tribulation and misery."*

From all that has been said; from the very phraseology used in the text, that a successful war is to be made against the Lord's witnesses by a power characterised as being from hell, it is evident that something very dreadful is to take place. It is no doubt that which will "seal the servants of God in their foreheads"† as a mark of their deliverance from those yet greater evils to be inflicted by the avenging hand of God upon the world, immediately following the sounding of the seventh trumpet, or the relaxing of the hold of the "four winds of heaven." Profession is now easy, and is no absolute mark of a real believer in Jesus; but when reproach and shame, hunger and thirst, spoliation and oppression, and it may be torture and death, shall stare us in the face, the case will be altered. The man that, in the strength of Divine grace, can stand all this,

* Brit. Mag. May 1834.

† Rev. vii. 5; and above, ch. vi.

and, as it is expressed in the seven Epistles, “overcome,” will assuredly have a seal on his forehead, not to be mistaken. In reference to it each believer may say with Paul, “I can do all things through Christ strengthening me; for when I am weak, then am I strong.” “Fear none of those things,” saith our Lord (in this book, Rev. ii. 10), “which thou shalt suffer; behold the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation” (the church of Smyrna, to which this was addressed) “ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” And the same language is addressed to us.

FOURTH. The place where this great persecution shall happen:—

“And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.” (ch. xi. 8.)

There can be no question but that the great city here spoken of is the empire of Rome, divided into its ten kingdoms, and for the following reasons:—1st. Because the witnesses are described as prophesying or bearing their testimony in the presence of those Gentiles, or idolatrous Christians, who tread under foot, by their abominations, the holy city forty and two months; which the Gentiles, by this chronological correspondence of their allotted period with the time, times, and half a time of the little Roman horn of Daniel, can refer to no other than the subjects of the same region. And as the term “city,”

in the second verse, “the holy city,” manifestly is allegorical, and refers not to a literal city but to an empire, so the term, as here again used, signifies the same thing; and, for the reason above given, the same empire. In the former case it is applied in an ecclesiastical sense; in the latter, where it is termed “the great city,” it has a secular signification.

2d. Because the brief but highly expressive description here given, answers to the Papal Roman kingdoms, and to no other: besides which, no other empire has continued during the whole of this long period of 1260 years. The comparison is to Sodom, and Egypt, and Jerusalem. The very mention of three distinct places, one of them a nation, and two of them cities, infallibly proves, even if the epithet “spiritual” had not been used in speaking of them, that they are to be understood in a mystical or symbolical sense; for it is evident, that if considered literally, it would involve an absurdity, as if it was the literal Sodom or Egypt, it could not be the literal Jerusalem. The first characteristic by which this empire, where the witnesses are to be persecuted, is to be known, is its likeness to Sodom. It is not the first time this figure has been used by the Holy Spirit, to express an utter corruption of morals and manners, such as was described under the fourth seal to belong to the Roman empire. The prophet Isaiah uses it in speaking of the sins of Judah in his own time (ch. i. 9), saying, “Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we

should have been like unto Gomorrah." No symbol could, indeed, be used more significant to express a state of filthiness and habitual uncleanness ; and all history, public and private, demonstrates that both in principle and in practice the papal world has been one sink of iniquity. It is elsewhere spoken of by Him whose judgment is infallible, as being notorious for its idolatry, murders, sorceries, fornication, and thefts."*

The second characteristic by which this great city or empire is to be discovered, is in its likeness to Egypt. 'This nation is known in connection with the church of God, by its grinding oppression and tyranny ; so much so, that Egyptian bondage is as expressive and proverbial a term, as the wickedness of Sodom. In this respect it is equally the counterpart of papal Rome, which has from age to age fulfilled the prediction in Daniel respecting it, that it should "wear out the saints of the Most High," and cause them to "prophesy in sackcloth." This can be described in no stronger language than by the comparison here used, and it is a fearful mark of identity.

The third and last characteristic which is brought forward, is its likeness to Jerusalem ; and lest this should be misapplied if only the name were mentioned, as in the former cases—which it was very likely to be—the point of comparison in this instance is expressly brought forward ; it is the only mark of

* Rev. ix. 20, 21.

recognition “ *where our Lord was crucified !* ” That is, the empire in which the witnesses are to be silenced by the beast out of the bottomless pit, is one that would be like Jerusalem of old in its having crucified the Lord Jesus Christ. The Saviour’s own lamentation over this devoted city is to the same effect—“ O Jerusalem, Jerusalem ! thou that *killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee*, how often would I have gathered thee as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not.” So that it is intended we should here understand, that what in this respect Jerusalem of old was famous for, and for what it was especially guilty, so should the empire which it here represents. And, for the truth of this mark of identity, I would refer to what is said under the fourth and fifth seals ; premising that what is thus done to the Lord’s people, is considered as done to himself. “ Why persecutest thou *me* ? ” was the challenge given to Paul ; implying that Christ’s servants are the mystical parts of his own body, and that those who persecute and kill them, are considered as persecuting and killing Him. In this view, this “ great city ” is the place literally where our Lord has been crucified ; and that to an extent so fearfully great as to mark a long era of time, expressed by the cry of the martyrs for vengeance.* I will only follow out the comparison by one more observation, that in like manner as Jerusalem, whilst it was full of all these crimes, was

* Rev. vi. 10.

called the Holy City ; so is this the antitype blasphemously called the Holy Roman Empire, and its tyrannical rulers Most Holy, Most Christian Kings, and the head of the apostacy by still more impious titles.

One more observation on this head, and I have done. Is not the consideration of *our* being part of an empire characterized for its abominable wickedness as Sodom, for its cruel tyranny to the Lord's people as Egypt, and for its killing of them as Jerusalem, in the last degree alarming, when the miraculous burning of the one, the repeated plagues of the other, and the awful destruction of the last, are borne in mind ? If the type, however, in this respect, is to hold good even to the end, which it assuredly will ; it is cheering to reflect, that one other peculiarity attended all these calamities, which, as we shall presently see, it is decreed shall likewise distinguish the antitype ; and that is the *preservation of the righteous !*

But it is in one particular part of this great empire, where especially this terrific tragedy is to take place, and where this public exposure of the triumph of the wicked over religion and truth is to be made. It is said to be in the street, or more emphatically the broad street, the great place, or the *market-place* of the great city—in other words, in the principal kingdom of the empire, for this is the usual and indeed the most natural interpretation that can be given to the word. In determining which of the ten kingdoms is intended by this broad place or street, we are

guided by another controlling principle ; it is necessary not only that it should be the leading kingdom—what the chief street is to a great city—but it is likewise absolutely required that that kingdom should contain the churches which are thus to suffer. This principle is indeed so obvious, that almost without an effort of mind, England, or, more properly speaking, the British nation, would appear to be the particular district of the “ great city ” referred to. If France or Austria were to dispute the pre-eminence in reference to the “ broad street or market-place ”—a pre-eminence which, it is presumed, no impartial person would concede to them ; and one to which, looking at the superior commerce and traffic of England, they are certainly neither of them entitled,—yet respecting the other point of identity, that of being the seat or depository of the Lord’s witnesses, there can be no question. I consider therefore, that by this expression, “ the broad street of the great city,” England could scarcely be more distinctly pointed out as being the kingdom in which the persecution is to take place, even though it had been mentioned by name. And as we are none of us willing to yield the palm of superiority, when treating on other subjects—nor is it just we should, for we are unquestionably, in this our day and generation, the first of nations—it is our wisdom on this occasion not to cast from us the distinction here bestowed, but, in the prospect before us, to “ lift up our heads, for our redemption draweth nigh.”

FIFTH. The next thing to be noticed, is the time this persecution is to last.

“ And they of the people, and kindreds, and tongues, and nations shall see their dead bodies *three days and an half*, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put into graves.” (ver. 9.)

Here is another and a very strong proof, in addition to those above-named, that the “great city” must mean a great empire, and the Roman empire; otherwise the “dead bodies” of the witnesses could not be seen by the *peoples, and kingdoms, and tongues*; for these expressions signify, throughout the whole of the Revelation, the several nations which compose that empire.

It is likewise a proof that the time here mentioned cannot signify literal time; since it is not possible that so many different nations should be represented as looking upon the dead bodies of the witnesses, that is, upon the ruins of the whole church, for three days and an half only. Especially when we see half a day added to the number, which it seems absurd to imagine of an event that is to be of so general an extent all over the Roman empire. It must therefore necessarily be symbolical time, as before explained, “a year for a day,” and signify that this fiercest persecution of the church is to last THREE YEARS AND AN HALF,—*and but three years and an half!*

From its being said that the peoples, and kindreds, and tongues shall *see* these dead bodies all the three years and an half, it would appear as if what is

signified by the slaughter of the witnesses would be an act suddenly decisive and complete. And this is what we might expect from the kind of instrumentality which is to bring it about, and the kind of death to be inflicted. It is not, as hath been already explained, a bodily death, but is agreeable to the ordinary signification of killing and slaying throughout the whole of this book ; as for instance, the killing of the third part of men in the sixth trumpet ; the not killing them in the former trumpet ; the death of the creatures in the sea in the second ; in all these death is taken for the extinction of the name and profession of the whole or part of the Roman nation, or a political death. In the present case it is a total suppression of the public profession of the true religion, which is the mystical life of the witnesses ; it is death to the testimony they bear to the truth ; it is the true members of the church of Christ coerced into a state of perfect silence.

Although however the act which brings about this state will be suddenly decisive and complete, yet there must be a peculiar significancy in its being said their dead bodies shall not be suffered, throughout the whole time the persecution lasts, to be buried or put into graves. It appears plainly to intimate, that the oppressed church shall be kept in a *visible* though ruined and crushed condition, and that in a way that shall aggravate its misery ; but *how*, the event must explain. There is evidently something in the character of the persecution altogether that will terrifically distinguish it from all preceding ones. The state

of the church at all other times during the 1260 years, has only the name of the witnesses prophesying *in sackcloth*; but this is represented by making war with them, and overcoming them, and killing them; which must signify, that it is as much more considerable than any former one, as the killing of a man is in comparison of his being in a sorrowful and a mourning condition.

The three years and an half being an incomplete number, I cannot but consider must, in like manner to the "time times and an half,"* have a reference to some seven, as the whole number of it, of which they are the half. For this term of three and an half, is in itself so precise and so unusual a determination of the whole time of an event, and the whole number seven is so commonly used to signify the whole of things of the same kind, or the perfection of a series of actions, that I cannot but consider this as belonging to some remarkable seven.

It is, I think, not improbable but that it may be the week or seven days mentioned in the last verse of the 9th chapter of Daniel; and more especially as a direct reference is made to its bisection. "And he shall confirm the covenant with many for *one week*; and in the midst of the week," or in the half of the week, "he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease."

The sacrifice and the oblation ceased after the three years and an half of the public ministry of our Lord

* See Diss. ch. x. p. 262.

himself by his death and resurrection, and left the remaining three years and an half to be fulfilled by some other similar ministry. For both parts of the week being to confirm the same covenant, according to Wintle,* for the purpose of making a *firm* covenant, if one has a reference to a ministry, so must the other. In this view of the subject there appears to be an uncommon beauty, as well as a deepening interest in the idea, that as one part of the week commenced the Christian dispensation, so the other part will close it—the first, by the personal ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ himself; the last, by those of his witnesses; and the parallel, as we shall immediately see, will be most close.

SIXTH. The public rejoicing which this persecution will occasion, and the assigned reason—

“And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry; and shall send gifts one to another: because these two witnesses tormented them that dwell upon the earth.” (v. 10.)

The rejoicing here spoken of appears to be that of the highest description, and is set forth in such particulars as to shew it to be complete. The language used is the same as that ascribed to the Jews on the days of their greatest rejoicing, and such as was shewn on the occasion of their great deliverance from the malice of Haman: “A day of gladness and feasting, and a good day, and of sending portions one to

* Wintle on Daniel.

another.”* This unbounded delight, it is said, will be shown by *those that dwell on the earth*, because the two witnesses have tormented them. What *has* been done is a matter of history; and therefore the witnesses *having* tormented them that “dwell on the earth,” who it is that are intended by this description may be best ascertained by inquiring who it is that have been tormented by them.

It is first necessary to explain, that this tormenting appears to allude to the words of Ahab to Elijah,† “Art thou he that troubleth Israel?” and means bringing a curse upon the land.‡ It is the necessary result of that enmity which was put between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman—an enmity which has never ceased to be shewn, wherever God hath been truly worshipped. “How is it,” asks Mr. Thelwall, “that the humble disciple of Jesus, who simply takes God at his word, receives without hesitation, upon his authority, every sentence in the Bible; and desires and acts accordingly—that this man is excepted from all rules of toleration? that *his* opinions are not to be endured? And if he escape actual buffeting, cruel injustice, and bloody persecution, it is only that the inward hatred of the Liberals may vent itself upon him in a ten-fold contempt? How is this? I will tell you: It is natural that the children of the devil, however different from each other in some respects, should all agree in tolerating one

* Esther ix. 19, 22; Neh. viii. 10, 12.

† 1 Kings xviii. 17.

‡ Josh. vii. 25; 1 Sam. xiv. 29.

another; and that, therefore, all manner of lies and falsehoods, errors and delusions, should be endured and repeated—for the devil is the author of them all; and however his children may sometimes quarrel, it is natural that on some occasions they should cordially unite, and act as brethren of one family. But real Christian faith comes down from heaven—it is the offspring of God—and it is therefore hated by all that hellish rout; they cannot endure it.”*

This is the kind of tormenting therefore that is here alluded to, the contrary life and conversation of the Lord’s people to that of the people of the world, which to them is a perpetual torment and reproach. Its effect is seen in the lives of Cain and Abel; but most conspicuously in that of our blessed Lord and Saviour himself, which was such a keen and perpetual torment to the pharisaical Jews, that they could not be satisfied till it was quenched in his blood. From its being in this manner that the two witnesses have likewise tormented “them that dwell on the earth,” by these latter must be meant those upon whom it has had a similar effect to that which it had upon Cain and upon the wicked Jews: in other words, it means the idolatrous paganizing Christians; for it is they who have persecuted and slain, from age to age, those that have shown forth a righteous conversation. It is these therefore that will rejoice on the occasion of the coming tribulation; it is the myrmidons of Rome that will be in such an ecstasy of joy to see the

* Sermons, p. 309.

success of the beast out of the bottomless pit. Although the greatest it will not be the first demonstration of such an ebullition of delight at the sufferings of the Saints of God, as the rejoicings at the horrid massacre of St. Bartholomew can testify. Let the church therefore be awake to all her enemies. If the ostensible arm that strikes her dead be Infidelity, those that can so signally rejoice and triumph over her fall, cannot but have lent all their best aid towards its accomplishment, and, as the most incredulous now begin to confess, *do* lend their aid, and, in every way they can devise, are sapping the foundations of her strength. And it is not easy to conceive anything that in stronger terms could demonstrate the greatness of the tribulation, and the depth of the trial that is coming upon us, than that it should be so great a gratification to the malice of those that hate her.

Having thus gone through these few verses, which gave such a particular account of the last great Persecution, “the Tribulation, the great one,”* we now come to speak of the Church’s triumphant rescue and deliverance.

* See chap. vi.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE

CHURCH'S TRANSLATION TO HEAVEN;

OR

THE ASCENSION OF THE TWO WITNESSES,

BEING

STILL A CONTINUATION OF THE CONCLUDING SCENES
OF THE SIXTH TRUMPET.

The connection of the history of the Two Witnesses with that of the Seven Seals and first Six Trumpets—Depressed condition of the true church for 1260 years—Connection of the VII. of Revelation, with the ascension of the two witnesses—Translation of the true church to heaven—The witnesses' revival to life—In the first place a political revival—The Spirit of life from God, what—The translation demonstrated—Typified by Elijah—All the result of sovereign grace.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE
CHURCH'S TRANSLATION TO HEAVEN.

BEFORE considering the next two verses, which describe the glorious and triumphant manner in which God will appear for his people at the end of this three years and an half persecution, it will throw additional light upon the subject, if for a moment we retrace the events of the seven seals and the six first trumpets, and connect them with the new aspect of the church given in this history of the two witnesses. In contemplating its state, as it appeared under the influence of the ruling powers of the empire, that is, as it is exhibited under the seven seals, in vain do we attempt to discover, after at least the first seal in the age of Constantine, anything like the appearance of real vital godliness in its external aspect. We see nothing but a state of gradual decay, corruption, and extreme wickedness, ending in the most awful apostacy. We hear indeed the voice of martyrs crying for vengeance, giving fearful intima-

tion of what was the aspect of the times : and we behold altogether the most convincing proof that “the outer court was indeed given to the Gentiles,” even to the moment that the mighty angel proclaimed that “time was no more ;” that is, until forty and two months were ended.

As little, or less, could we discover of the true church, in the horrors of the tremendous judgments of the first six of the trumpets. To the question then, Where are we to look for it ? I reply, In the account given in this place under the symbol of two witnesses ; and here we find its situation accurately portrayed, as being that of mournful sorrowing and depressed, “clothed in sackcloth”—and as trodden under foot by the “Gentiles,” or the paganized Christians—or, as it is expressed by Daniel, “*worn out.*” For speaking of the little horn of the papacy, he says, “And he shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out *the saints of the Most High*” *—the Lord’s witnessing church—“and think to change times and laws : and they shall,” he adds, and the language bears directly upon the prophecy before us, “they shall be given into his hand, until a time, and times, and the dividing of time”—they shall be given into his hands to wear out and tread underfoot forty and two months—or, they shall prophesy or bear their testimony a thousand two hundred and three score days clothed in sackcloth. The

* Diss. ch. ix. p. 221.

narrative, the persons, the incidents, and the duration of time, in all the cases are the same.

Perhaps the arrangement that will set the closing scenes which are here described in the clearest and most convincing light, both as it regards the persecution described in the last chapter, and the glorious deliverance now about to be considered, is to connect them with the same closing scenes described in the 7th chapter of the Revelation, and with their explanation.*

Thus connected they will stand as follows:—
“ And after overturnings and wars of the sixth seal, or of the French Revolution had ceased, I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds, that the hurricane of war which will be let loose upon a guilty world, *on the sounding of the trumpet of the seventh angel, or the coming of the THIRD WOE*, should not deluge the world with misery and slaughter, until the servants of God, the saints of the Most High, the Lord’s witnesses, should be secured from its fury. And every individual member of the true church, in every part of the world, was, during a most severe persecution of three years and a half, purified, and made white, and tried, witnessing in the face of hunger, and thirst, and oppression, and sorrow, a good confession for Christ, thus bearing a seal in their foreheads that they belonged to the living God.”

* See ch. vi. of this Work.

“ And after three days and an half, the Spirit of life from God entered into them; and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them. And they heard a great voice from heaven, saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them.” (vers. 11, 12.)

“ It was after this translation to heaven, that the Apostle beheld that great multitude which no one could number, from all nations, and tribes, and peoples, and tongues, *stand before the throne, and before the Lamb*, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands. He beheld this great multitude, this cloud of witnesses, who had come of the great tribulation; and he heard their song, ascribing THE SALVATION to God and to the Lamb! On this event transpiring, on this great deliverance being effected, and *not before*, the second woe will be past! the Ottoman empire falls! and behold!—oh, behold! THE THIRD WOE COMETH QUICKLY!

From this it will be perceived that I consider the words above quoted, viz. the 11th and 12th verses, as expressly asserting *a translation to heaven!* and as affording therefore the strongest and most direct confirmation of the explanation I have given to the seventh chapter; and that the two deliverances are one. Most of the arguments that have been brought forward to prove the one, will likewise prove the other; and therefore to those arguments I would, in the first place, direct my readers' attention;* and, in connection with them, request

* See ch. vii.

his further attention to the few additional remarks on what is before us.

I would notice, as a preliminary observation, one remarkable peculiarity in the first twelve verses of this chapter—and that is, that although highly symbolical, like the other prophecies of this book, yet they are given in the way of narrative, not of vision : and that this narrative, in the various particulars we have considered, enters not only into the detail of the mournful outward circumstances of the Lord's people, but into the very essence of their life, strength, security, and privileges ; closing with this their final triumph.

In endeavouring to ascertain the precise meaning of the resurrection and ascension of the two witnesses, we ought not to keep out of our minds for a moment, that it is an event which is to happen immediately preceding the dreadful sounding of the seventh trumpet, and, as hath been already in several places explained, the consequent utter ruin of the ten kingdoms. They must therefore signify something that can comport with such a state of things. Whatever the deliverance is, and a very great and complete one it will be, it must be one that will rise above all the horrors of the seventh trumpet ! And as if to mark its completeness the more, it is set in the highest contrast with that event. But we must proceed to particulars.

It is first said, that at the end of the three years and an half of their sufferings, “ the spirit of life from God entered into them ; and they stood upon

their feet." To perceive the full force of these words we must look back to where it is said, that they have been *made war against, and overcome, and KILLED: and their dead bodies have lain publicly exposed, and not suffered to be put into graves!* I have explained on these words that the death here spoken of is not a literal death, but must be such a death as a church can suffer. In like manner must we consider *the life* to be such a resuscitation as a church can enjoy. As the former appears to signify the entire silencing or extinction of all profession whatever of the religion of the Gospel, *attended with circumstances of extreme contempt and ignominy*; so the mention of their standing upon their feet, not through any favour of man, but by "the Spirit of life from God" entering into them, carries with it the idea, that in the first instance, at the end of the three years and an half, they will, through some wonderful divine interposition, rise into favour and into power—that is, that they will not only recover their former position, "standing again upon their feet," but in a manner and in an attitude which will cause *great fear to fall upon those who see them!*

The expression, "the Spirit of life FROM GOD," is very strong, and, I consider, has a remarkable fulness of meaning. It is the same as is used in Gen. vii. 22, according to the marginal reading, "All in whose nostrils was the breath of life died." It ought to convey to us, whom it so personally and so nearly concerns, an inexpressibly delightful and

cheering feeling, that let the enemies of truth and revelation—the enemies of Christ and his saints—vent their impious rage as they may, and conceive, with that infidel Voltaire, that they have at length crushed that which is to them so great a torment, yet that their rage is vain, and their triumph but short. The Lord's witnesses shall be re-animated with the Spirit of life from God, and stand upon their feet, to the inexpressible confusion and dread of those who hate them; and even in this respect the Lord will vindicate his injured servants.

But a higher award, a nobler triumph than any earthly honour, enjoyment, or any earthly privileges, awaits them! They not only rise again into existence and to consideration, and that to the utter confusion of their enemies; but intimation, in some clear, unequivocal manner, is given them FROM HEAVEN. *They heard*, it is said, *a loud voice from heaven*, that they are to ascend thither; for this loud voice, in whatever way it is conveyed, said unto them, "*Come up* HITHER." There is room for no mistake here, with regard to the language used:—the voice was from heaven! the heaven of heaven where God resides! and it will bear no other meaning. It can be no political heaven; not only this word as used in other places forbids the idea,* but the circumstances which surround it render it impossible. The political heaven, or ruling powers, consists of those who have been the cause of all the church's

* Rev. x. 4 : xiv. 2, 13.

sufferings, and they now behold its resurrection to political life with “great fear,” and therefore cannot have contributed to it. But as if to shew that political honour cannot be meant by this great and loud call from heaven, the former verse, as above explained, shews they have already attained it. What follows, therefore, must be something of a totally distinct and infinitely more glorious nature.

“AND THEY ASCENDED UP TO HEAVEN IN A CLOUD, AND THEIR ENEMIES BEHELD THEM.” If it were possible to imagine this to be a political ascension, the last expression, “their enemies *beheld* them,” appears quite superfluous—because this would be a matter of course, and, as such, would not be noticed here. It implies further, that those who were before their enemies are still their enemies. It must be, therefore, that this expression refers to an extraordinary scene; to that most extraordinary scene which it was inferred, in a former part of this work,* must take place, from the whole phraseology of the 7th chapter, viz.,—A TRANSLATION TO HEAVEN! All the interpretations there given, to which the reader is again referred, is here fully confirmed by this one assertion, “*And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud!*”

In the language of the 7th chapter we will again follow them; for it is a thing most delightful to dwell upon. “I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no one could number, of all nations, and kindreds

* See chap. vi.

and peoples, and tongues," (and *this* language is sufficient of itself to explain what is meant by the two witnesses,) "I beheld this innumerable multitude," says the Apostle, "*standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and they cry with a loud voice, saying, The salvation be ascribed to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb. And one of the elders spake, saying unto me, These clothed in white robes, who are they, and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said unto me, These are they which came out of THE GREAT TRIBULATION, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb: therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple, and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes!*"

Thus this three years and an half is not only the counter-part of the three years and an half of our Saviour's sufferings, making the "one week" of Daniel, ch. ix. ver. 27, but of his resurrection and ascension. And here it may not be irrelevant to notice, that the prophet Elijah likewise appears to have been an eminent and remarkable type of the two witnesses; or of the church in this her last period of

trial and suffering. His being miraculously fed for three years and an half, during a time of great famine;* and the still greater famine of the Word of God; the fixed resolution of his enemies, during this period, to take away his life; a sound of abundance of rain being sent immediately after his servant had been to look at the sea *seven times*;† the miraculous confirmation which God gave in favour of his own truth at the time of sacrifice; the unanimous attestation that was given to this attestation by all who witnessed it; and finally, Elijah's triumphant ascension into heaven in chariots of fire and horses of fire—all appear highly significant of what we have seen in the history of God's witnessing people in this place; and to point to their end on earth being, as it is expressed it shall be, of a similar nature. As he therefore ascended to heaven without dying—as Christ himself, whilst his disciples beheld, was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight‡—so shall all the members of his church, at this great crisis, “ascend up to heaven in a cloud!”

And it is observable that our Saviour himself brings forward these three years and six months' famine in Elijah's time, as a proof of the great and awful doctrine of his own sovereignty;§ teaching us that the supply of bread and oil, which his poor and despised church has received in her mournful and depressed condition, has been the result of discrimi-

* Luke iv. 25.

† 1 Kings xviii.

‡ Acts i. 9.

§ Luke iv. 25, 26.

nating mercy, according to the language in St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion upon whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy."* Hence, when the elect of God are gathered together in heaven, the praise is given to whom the praise is due. "The salvation," they cry with a loud voice, "be ascribed unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." And the top stone shall be brought forth with joy, crying Grace, Grace, unto it—"Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be all the glory."

* Rom. ix. 15, 16.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE GREAT REVOLUTION

THAT IS TO HAPPEN AT THE TIME OF THE CHURCH'S
TRANSLATION TO HEAVEN;

AS THE LAST CONCLUDING SCENE PREVIOUS TO THE

FALL OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE,

OR THE

CEASING OF THE SIXTH TRUMPET.

Caution in speaking of future things—A great Revolution to happen—One of the ten kingdoms to fall—Titles of honour totally abolished—The fright these things occasion—Another argument proving that the deliverance of the Saints will be a translation to Heaven—The second woe past!—Its commencement clearly defined in the taking of Constantinople in 1453—The Turks prepared for this great undertaking—Their fall will be a most signal event—Harmony of the different lines of prophecy both in the old and New Testaments—Encouragement to prophetic studies—Rev. Charles Buck's notice of this chronology—Rev. Mr. Fletcher of Madely's remarks on prophecy.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE GREAT REVOLUTION

WHICH IS IMMEDIATELY TO PRECEDE THE FALL
OF CONSTANTINOPLE.

THERE is only one other scene mentioned, as attendant on the conclusion of the sixth trumpet—and there *is* one other which is to happen ! and that at the same time as the one described in the last chapter. For it is said—

“ And in the same hour there was a great earthquake ; and the tenth part of the city fell ; and in the earthquake were slain of the names of men seven thousand : and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.” (ver. 13.)

In speaking of things that are future, whilst it is peculiarly necessary and proper to use the utmost caution and circumspection, yet, if the subject is sufficiently important to go into at all, it is necessary likewise to speak with plainness and decision ; and, as far as we have firm ground to go upon, to give the full sense of every prediction that comes across our path without fear or hesitation. With the encouragement from God, which we have in various passages, to

study this part of His Holy Word, we ought not to be deterred either from the possibility that we may be mistaken, or from the event being contrary to and at variance with the general expectation, or even with probability. It is the unquestionable duty of every person to give the word of warning, where he conceives he has the authority of the Scriptures on his side ; and it is for others to judge and examine what real ground he has for so doing. My only wish therefore is, that every person who may give these pages a perusal, would imitate the conduct of the noble Bereans, and search for themselves whether these things are so.*

With this feeling, and without the most remote desire in all I have written, or may write, to be either wise above what is written, or above other people, I proceed with the prophecy before us, which says,—that in the same hour, (which expression, considered chronologically, signifies the same month) as the translation of the witnesses shall take place, there will be a great earthquake, which signifies, as has been previously explained, A GREAT REVOLUTION !”† What historically took place in fulfilment of the very same expression being used on the opening of the sixth seal, *the events of the French Revolution disclosed !* What will take place on this other similar political eruption transpiring, in “ *the street of the great city,*” we can only imagine as far as this verse gives the information.

* Acts xvii. 11.

† See ch. v. p.

It is said, first, that *the tenth part of the city fell*; by which expression it must be understood that one of the ten kingdoms of the Roman empire *will fall*; that is, in some way or other, be RUINED! As the whole prophecy has especially pointed at the kingdom where the Lord's witnesses were to be persecuted, "the street of the great city," so there is no reason whatever, that I know of, but to believe that the same is still intended. If this be the case there is the strongest reason to conclude that England is intended; for it is to be a *great* revolution, and England, the seat of the church, is a great kingdom, and the events of prophecy are great events.

In this earthquake, and it is the only additional particular that is mentioned, it is said there will be slain seven thousand names of men. The *names of men* must signify titles of honour and distinction; of dignities, offices, and repute; and by their being slain, that they will be abolished. And the number seven, or the number of perfection, being added to the highest numerical, making the symbolical number of seven thousand, that they will all—ALL be abolished! Something of this description took place in the great French Revolution, in which the epithet *Equality*, as is well known, was the watch-word that levelled all distinctions, from the prince to the peasant, in the dust. The same infidel and ungodly principles, "from the *bottomless pit*," one of the chief of which is despising authorities, being now

rampant in society, it is only natural they should take the same turn, and produce similar effects.

And *the remnant* (that is, I imagine, those who, though not among this godless crew, were nevertheless not found numbered with the saints, or at least not willing to share their sufferings,) *were affrighted*,—were, as they may well be, in the most dreadful consternation, and at length confessed the hand of God. Most probably they had seen the persecution of the Lord's people, and the great tribulation through which they had passed, with indifference—perhaps with complacency; but now, when they beheld the issue and the end, in the exaltation of the one party to heaven, and the madness of the other in the destruction of civil society, and in their own ruin, they, like Nebuchadnezzar of old, gave glory to the God of heaven. Perhaps these are what we are to understand by the five foolish virgins, who thought they might go on slumbering and sleeping, but who now, after the door is shut, awake themselves to their danger, “saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.” But he will answer and say, “Verily I say unto you, I know you not.”

The irremediable state of anarchy and confusion just described, as the result of the *great earthquake* that is to happen *in the same hour* as the ascension of the witnesses, or what we may term, in allusion to the above application of the events, the ascension of the five wise virgins, is another argument to prove that it cannot be an ascension to worldly grandeur, or to any privileges the world can confer,

since both its grandeur and power will be both swept away. The only alternative therefore appears that it must be what we have above considered it, *an ascension* TO HEAVEN. It is a great thing to expect; but if God has decreed it—and it is declared by St. Paul, that those who are alive at his coming shall be caught up to meet him in the air*—it is not too much to believe and to expect.

Few, I imagine, will be disposed to quarrel with such a termination of their sufferings, when their fainting spirits are passing through the deepest waters of human sorrow and suffering, which they will experience in the great tribulation, and when at length they shall behold the most horrid wars and devastations ready to burst over the heads of an ungodly world. Oh no! they well then understand what our Saviour means in saying, “When these things begin to come to pass, then look up and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh.”† This solemn and heart-inspiring truth, the speedy return of Christ to the earth, and their own consequent ascension to heaven, will enable them to smile in persecution, in reproach, and in death; and in joyful anticipation to exclaim, “Come, Lord Jesus! O come quickly!”

All these things being accomplished, and the object of relating them in this place in the book of the Revelation attained—which object was to join

* 1 Thess. iv. 17.

† Luke xxi. 28.

the concluding scenes of the time, times, and half a time, with the ceasing of the sixth trumpet, thereby more clearly to demonstrate the simultaneous conclusion of the two periods—it is at last said (ver. 14), “THE SECOND WOE IS PAST!” The Turkish empire, which for so many years has been tottering, drying up, wasting away, now falls: to which announcement is immediately added, “*Behold!*”—take particular notice of it!—“*Behold, the third woe cometh QUICKLY!*”

In the chapter on the second woe, I have expressed my conviction that the period assigned for its continuance, which has been explained to signify 391 years,* is to be calculated as the period which the Turkish power, the instrument of it, is to keep possession of Constantinople, the capital of the ancient Eastern Roman Empire; this being the great work for which it was prepared.” Mahomet the Second took it on the 29th of May, A.D. 1453; on which occasion he slew Constantine Paleologus, the last of above a thousand years’ succession of Roman emperors, and destroyed, as has been already described, with unwonted barbarity, the inhabitants; and in the complete conquest of the empire which followed, he triumphed alike over Christianity and the Roman name in that quarter of the world.

No period of time appears to be more clearly marked; and unwilling as any person may be to

* Ch. ix.

attend to prophetical dates, it seems difficult in this case to pass them over, or to pronounce them obscure. This great event, the fall of the capital of the Cæsars, stands so prominently recorded in the annals of Europe, as an event of surpassing importance and grandeur, as one of those great catastrophes that shake the stability of surrounding nations, and make the world to tremble—it agrees so fully in all the particulars of the siege, and the important results with the prophecy that has recorded it—and it bears, in all respects, so completely the distinguishing marks which have been explained to belong to a prophetical era, that there appears no possible reason to hesitate in considering it as the true event forming the commencement of this most important chronological period. All preceding events in the Turkish annals, how much soever they may have attracted the notice of former commentators, are now out of the question ; as 391 years, reckoned from any one of them, probable or improbable as they might have appeared, must have long ago expired ; whereas the Ottoman empire yet stands. Nor is there any succeeding event in their history but what sinks into insignificance compared with it. In the eyes of Gibbon it was so pre-eminently great, as to be made to close what he styles “ the memorable series of revolutions which, in the course of thirteen centuries, gradually undermined, and at length destroyed, the solid fabric of Roman greatness :”*

* See Preface to *Decline and Fall*.

which series of revolutions he traces from the age of Trajan, A.D. 98, the date within a year or so of the writing of the Apocalypse, to the taking of Constantinople in 1453.

The empire of Turkey is in fact most emphatically the empire of Mahomet II.; he being in virtue of this great conquest, the acknowledged founder of its greatness, and hence he is considered by Knolles, in his history of the Turks, and by other historians, the first Ottoman emperor. In the same sense was Cyrus the founder of the Persian greatness, and Alexander the Great of that of Greece. All these respective monarchies had existed for centuries previous to the important position they were to assume in connection with the church of God, and the prophetic earth. They had all previously been *prepared* for the work they were destined by God to accomplish; but they are only recognized in prophecy in its actual accomplishment. From the point of time, therefore, when this commences, it seems but reasonable that any assigned length of duration or chronological period should be reckoned. And as if to mark the importance of this date of an hour, day, month, and year, it stands first of all others in the book of Revelation; in fact, it is the only original one, except the thousand years of the Millennium, in this prophecy, and appears to be placed in connection with the sixth trumpet, for the purpose of drawing all others around it. For let this but be correctly ascertained, and it appears to be one of no difficult calculation, it will follow, from the contents of the tenth and

eleventh chapters, without touching on other predictions to prove the fact, that "the time of the end," the restoration of the Jews, the fall of the Papacy and the Western nations, and the deliverance of the church, will be likewise ascertained, as all are destined to happen at one and the same period of time; since it is after the particular enumeration of all these, or in direct reference to them, and *not before*, that it is said, "The second woe is past."

Indeed it is most observable, that the indications of the fall of Mahometanism as an ecclesiastical imposture in the Old Testament, under the appellation of "the time of the end," and in the New Testament as the passing away of the "second woe," are held forth as a signal; as something that was to be very visible, portending the certain near approach of all the great consummations above mentioned. Most probably the reason of this is because the Turks or Ottomans are in possession of the country of the Jews, whose restoration to the land of their fathers is to be the crisis of all nations. Therefore it is, that the fall of their empire is held up, both in the Old and New Testaments, as the sign of "the times of the Gentiles" being fulfilled. It is not without reason, therefore, that the present critical situation of Turkey, and the anticipations of the wisest politicians respecting the probability of its speedy downfall, excite at the present moment such marked attention in those who at all turn their minds to these things, both as it concerns the Jews and Gentiles. There are, indeed, many other signs of

the times alarming enough ; some of which have already been distinctly noticed. There are yet others which remain to be considered ; but there are, after all, none so clear, so unequivocal, as this, either as it respects circumstances or time ; either as it respects symbolical or chronological prophecy.

It is my most earnest wish to be neither dogmatical or presumptuous ; but with regard to any of these particulars, it seems difficult to imagine how a mistake can be made, confirming each other as they do in so striking a manner. The Turkish empire, which is called the second woe, is unquestionably, to all appearances, nearly past ; all that is included in the period of 1260 years, must likewise be nearly over ; the restoration of the Jews cannot be far distant ; and the signs that are to indicate these things are fast clustering around us. Many do run to and fro—knowledge has increased—“the king,” described in Daniel xi. 35—39, who was to appear just before the time of the end, has appeared, and with him the French revolution—and “the beast out of the bottomless pit,” gives the most alarming indications of his near approach. These are some of the circumstances ; some of the signs which point as to a crisis very, very near at hand. This being the case, there appears to be no presumption in the attempt to direct the anxious mind to the chronological periods which God has given, and to inquire how far they support these anticipations.

I have done so, as have likewise almost all that have gone before me in these studies ; and the

results of my inquiries, as they run throughout the whole of this work, and as they appear in the chronological chart in my former work, must, by this time, be familiar to the reader. It will be perceived they all point to a very early period, the year 1844; and although it is fashionable to object to the fixing of dates, yet so long as it is said, "things that are revealed belong to us and to our children for ever," I see not on what sufficient ground. "If Jesus told his disciples, (says the late Rev. John Fletcher, of Madeley,) that it was not theirs to know the times when these things should be accomplished, it does not follow that it must be hid from us, who are far more nearly concerned in them than they were. Add to this, that Daniel's Vision was to be closed *till the end*, and could not be perfectly known till very near the time of the fulfilling of it."*

"But ye, brethren," says the Apostle, "are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are the children of the light, and the children of the day."† And though Christ declared, when on earth, "of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father;" yet I think it may be questioned whether this state of ignorance was intended to last. Nor do I consider this passage is generally correctly understood; for, like all

* Letter on the Prophecies, Vol. X. of his Works.

† 1 Thess. v. 1.

other controverted passages, it cannot be at variance with the general scope of the written Word, nor with that which immediately precedes it, where it is said, that, as the approach of summer was known by the budding of the fig tree, so the approach of these things *should be known* by the signs that should precede them, *and which do now appear!*

The chronological period in question, clear as it now appears, could not, by any possibility, without further revelation, have been ever conjectured, until its commencement had been known by the event; and even after this, a veil appears to have been upon the mind until within a very few years back; so that any event but the right one should have been fixed upon. The late Rev. Charles Buck, in his valuable Theological Dictionary, published above thirty years ago, seems to have seen it aright; and I mention it more especially, as being the opinion of a Dissenting minister of high consideration. "The four angels were loosed, says the prediction, verse 18th, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men. This period, in the language of prophecy, makes 391 years, which being added to the year when the four angels were loosed, (prepared) will bring us down to 1844, or thereabouts, for the final destruction of the Mahometan empire."*

I will close with another quotation from the aforesaid letter of Mr. Fletcher, which letter was written

* See the article "Mahomet."

in Nov. 1755, nearly eighty years since ; or, be it remembered, nearly three generations ago ! “ If we are mistaken in forming conjectures—if the phenomena we hear of every where are but common providences—if these things happen not to us, but to our children, (as they most certainly will, *before the third generation is swept away*) is it not our business to prepare ourselves for them, to meditate on them, and to warn as many people as we can prudently, lest their blood should be required at our hands, were they to fall because of a surprise. Let us pray to God more frequently, that for the elects’ sake he would still more shorten the days of the tribulation, and add daily to the true church such as will be saved. But let us not forget to rejoice with Abraham, in seeing by faith the glorious day of our Lord, and to hasten, by our fervent prayers, that glorious kingdom, those happy days, when narrow shall be the way of destruction, when saints raised from the dead shall converse with living saints, and the world of spirits be manifested, in a great measure, to the material world ; in a word, when Jesus will be all in all.”

“ What a glorious prospect is this ! let us often think of these words of our Lord, ‘ Behold, I come quickly, blessed is he that mindeth the sayings of this prophecy. Let us join the spirit and the bride, who say, Come ! O let him that heareth say, Come ; and let him that is athirst come ; for he that testifieth these things says, Surely I come quickly. Amen ! even so come Lord Jesus.’ ”

CHAPTER XV.

THE

LAST SOLEMN JUDGMENT ON THE WESTERN NATIONS;

OR

THE THIRD WOE :

LIKEWISE

THE FIRST RESURRECTION, AND THE KINGDOM
OF CHRIST.

The preparations in Heaven for this event—Our indifference—Signs of its approach—Referred to Old Testament Prophets—They say little of Christian historical times—Of the latter times are profuse—Chief reason because they are connected with the Jewish Restoration—Why called “The mystery of God.”—Disbelief and infidelity of the present times—Certainty of the fulfilment of what remains—Song of the Elders—Its subject, the wrath of God—Kingdom of Christ—Daniel’s last great vision referred to—And other prophets—Resurrection of the righteous dead, another subject of their song—Proved from Daniel—Kingdom of the saints.—The four living creatures do not join in this song, and why—Extract from Toplady—Destruction of the destroyers—The church and ark opened in Heaven—The wars of this trumpet—A revolution—A northern invasion.

CHAPTER XV.

THE SOUNDING OF THE SEVENTH
TRUMPET;

OR

THE THIRD WOE.

“AND THE SEVENTH ANGEL SOUNDED!” (ch. xi. ver. 15.)

OH! could we see the preparations which are at this moment making in heaven for this surpassingly great event! What, though the pulpits are silent respecting it; what, though all the affairs of the world are going on as if no such event were to happen; and amidst all the dreams of futurity which men indulge, they never contemplate this—yet will it not therefore happen? Will our silence, our schemes, our indifference, turn aside the purposes, the declared purposes of the everlasting God? Oh no! *The seventh trumpet shall sound*; and soon, very very soon, will it have to be said, “the second woe is past;” and on this happening we are told *to behold*, to take notice, that the third woe *will come QUICKLY*!

And does all this indifference arise from no warn-

ings being given to us—no signs to prepare us for an event of so much importance? This cannot be said; for, most truly, no event that ever happened in the world, not even our Saviour's first coming, was ever ushered into the world with so many clear signs and warnings as now cluster upon upon us. It is not merely chronological periods which in abstract calculations we point to, although these speak with a clearness which the most sceptical ought not to despise; but it is the great, the marked, the extraordinary events of history that have multiplied upon us for the last fifty years, answering so exactly to the predictions of the "last times," to which we call the ever watchful attention of the Church. Mistakes may have been made in their *particular* application; but the *general* application has commended itself to almost every person who has taken up his pen to write on the subject. All see that we are living amidst the all-important scenes of the last times, however they may differ respecting a few years, in respect of chronology; and every new turn of affairs in the political world appears to bring things to that position to which the voice of prophecy points! It may well be asked, therefore, what further do we require, or, indeed, what further evidence could we expect God to give? The age is not one which will attend to prognostications, however ominous they may appear—at least, not to prognostications of evil!—nor indeed is it desirable they should, although it is a question whether they should be *altogether* despised. We

come back again therefore to the *only* safe ground on which we can rest, and to which we can trust—“the Word and the Testimony.”

It was intimated, as above noticed,* by way of anticipation, on the Lord Jesus Christ appearing with the little opened book, or the seventh opened seal in his hand, and when he, in the most solemn manner, virtually pronounced the papacy to be at an end, that “in the days of the seventh trumpet, when He shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared good tidings unto *his servants the prophets*.” There we were brought, by a direct reference to the Old Testament prophecies, and we therefore, in the first place, for a short time are called to dwell upon them, and to give a glance at what they say to the finishing of God’s mysterious dispensations. And the allusion to them, in regard to the events of the latter times, is most appropriate ; because in reference to all the intermediate events which have come before us, both as it respects the seven seals, and the six first trumpets, they are exceedingly brief, and do nothing more than glance at them in dim outline.

For instance, to trace for a few moments the indistinct prospect they afforded of what only regarded the Christian dispensation, unconnected with the Jewish, we may notice—that the great apostacy, described in the four first seals, is noticed by Daniel

in very few words in chap. xi. ver. 32,* and by implication in the rise of the two “little horns” of Mahometanism and Popery. The Reformation, and the persecutions to which it gave rise, the subjects of the fifth seal are similarly noticed in Dan. xi. 33, 34. The chief actor in the French Revolution, as the more immediate prelude to the last times, described in the sixth seal, is more fully noticed in ch. xi. vers. 36—39.† And the whole of the contents of the seventh chapter of the Revelation is but very slightly touched upon in the distant allusion made to the great tribulation in ver. 35, and ch. xii. ver. 10.‡

And with regard to the events symbolized by the first six trumpets, they are, in the Old Testament prophets, noticed in an equally brief way, being merely alluded to in the general command to “hew down the great tree” (Dan. iv. 14), and in the general description of Mahometanism, in ch. viii. vers. 9—12, and 23—25. On the whole of the important contents likewise of the eleventh chapter of the Revelation, as far as the 14th verse, the Jewish prophets are equally silent.

“But in the days of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound,” the case is reversed, and they become copious and profuse—so much so that we are referred to them for particulars; whilst on the actual sounding of the trumpet, very little more than

* See Diss. ch. xii. p. 323.

† Idem. chap. xii. pp. 329—339.

‡ Idem. p. 327.

the upshot of the whole is given ! It is as follows :—

“ And the seventh angel sounded, and there were great voices in Heaven, saying, The kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever.” (ver. 15.)

There is infinite wisdom in all this ; for if it had been otherwise, all that we find in the prophets respecting the finishing of the mystery of God, and which requires patient investigation to understand and apply, would, if given here, have rendered the whole too plain.

What the Holy Spirit has been pleased to intimate, in the Song of the Elders which follows, is quite sufficient to make us understand to what portion of the Old Testament prophecies we are referred ; particularly as it is expressly said that it is to the *finishing* of the mystery. So that in searching the prophets for what God hath “ declared ” on this subject, it is to the concluding scenes of their testimony that we are directed to look.

And there may likewise be another most important reason assigned for the things that concern the latter days being given to the Jewish prophets. This is, because *at this period of time the Jews come into sight again* : and these things are all indications of their own restoration, which at this time is to take place. They therefore concern them as much as us ; and by this reference to their own prophets they seem, in an especial manner, called upon by God to turn their earnest attention to what is declared respecting

the finishing of the mystery of God, which is to take place when the seventh angel shall *begin* to sound, as to events in which they will be prominent actors.

With regard to this great mystery, it may here be noticed, as we are thus called upon to allude to the Jews, that the Lord's cutting them off, and grafting in the Gentiles, has been *mysterious*. Further, that He should have permitted the almost universal apostacy of the Church, and His own pure worship, to be supplanted throughout the whole range of prophetic earth, and even far beyond it, by the two great powers of the Papacy and Mahometanism, and for so many hundreds of years, is a great mystery. But, to particularize no further, the whole scheme and history of redemption, from the fall of Adam to the present moment of time, has been most mysterious. In the days of the seventh angel, however, when he shall begin to sound, *the mystery will be finished!* The curtain will be drawn; and not only the last important scenes will be displayed, but the Church will then know the why and the wherefore—the mystery will be over!

“And the seventh angel sounded!” It will be well to consider a little what is involved in this sound. On the Apostle's being told “to eat,” or digest the little opened book, it was sweet unto him. So is it sweet to us to hear (following his example,) that “the kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord and His Christ.” But the bitterness follows, when we come to reflect what the seventh trumpet is; and that is the third and last

WOE. It is difficult for us, who have so long and so happily dwelt in peace and safety, and who are comparatively so little aware of the horrors, miseries, and destruction brought on the world, by the two former woes, even to imagine what is involved in this most expressive term. In fact, what "A WOE" implies, I believe no language can adequately convey the idea;* and whilst the approach of such a calamity is either distant, or supposed to be distant, the most faithful descriptions of what the former ones have been, make but little impression. Perhaps the real cause of all this may, in a great degree, be the infidelity of the human heart. God is not believed. It requires the exercise of that faith which, believing "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God," receives it as the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen.† God, in like manner, hath said, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." He hath likewise said, "He that believeth shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." These, and many other such like denunciations are scattered throughout the Scriptures; but how little effect do they produce! God is not believed,—men do not believe God will be as good as His word.

And such is the case with regard to the days of coming vengeance. Here we are told that the third woe will come quickly after the second is past; and

* See Diss. ch. viii. p. 192; ch. x. p. 264; and ch. xiii.

† Hebrews xi. 1.

although all persons and commentators are alike agreed that the second *is* nearly past, yet how few amongst us believe that the third *will come*!

It may indeed be said, that there is no one part of the Revelation in which there exists so unanimous an agreement as that the Turks were the second woe. It is a point which even the Popish interpreter, Dr. Walmsley, admits; it is likewise a fact, that in the whole range of political speculation, there is no subject on which there exists so unanimous an opinion, as that the empire which they founded on the ruins of the Eastern Roman Empire, is now on the point of extinction! Must therefore the third woe not soon follow? Will not God indeed be as good as His word; and will not the event of Constantinople falling out of the hands of its present possessors, be the certain signal of the almost immediate approach, to say the least, of as great calamities coming upon the nations of the earth, as were brought about by the Saracens or the Turks?

Nothing can be more certain; and we are called upon to take particular notice of it;—to observe it most attentively. “BEHOLD! the third woe cometh quickly.” *This is a command*; and it is our duty therefore to take warning by the very gradual ceasing of the sixth trumpet, or the ceasing of the second woe; and to obey God in this strong injunction. Ought we not, instead of the silence manifested by all parties, to hear this terrible announcement from the lips of the Lord Jesus Christ, reverberated alike from the pulpit, from the platform, from the press,

and even from the benches of the senate? But God is not obeyed! and therefore it will come upon all the world, as a snare, and they shall not escape!

On the coming however of the third woe, there is no such indifference of the Church in Heaven—for, on the seventh angel sounding, it is said:—

“And the four-and-twenty elders which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, saying: We give Thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to Thee thy great power, and hast reigned; and the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great, and shouldest destroy them that destroy the earth.’ (vers. 16—18.)

From this song of praise we perceive that what is coming upon the earth is fully known to the spirits of just men made perfect in heaven; and it is another confirmation of the deep interest they take in the things of the church on earth. We will now turn to the prophets, and see how far the things which they “declare” confirm, and harmonize with, the various particulars therein contained.

We will begin with the mystery of providence, as it is signified in the symbol of Daniel’s Great Image. The *finishing* of this is, that it shall be smitten on the ten toes, broken to pieces, and become like the chaff of the summer threshing floor.* The horrid

• Diss. ch. viii. p. 186.

wars therefore which are signified by this trumpet, are what is to be understood by the tremendous blow that performs this destruction on the ten kingdoms. This is alluded to in that part of the song of the Elders, where they say, "the nations were angry, and THY WRATH IS COME." The sceptre of mercy, which has been held out so long, and to us is yet held out, will then be withdrawn, and the door will be shut; only wrath, unmingled wrath, now remains; for all that could restrain it is now removed. "I can do nothing," the Lord said to Lot, "until thou art departed;" and when he and his family were accordingly departed out of the guilty city, then "down the fiery deluge poured." So the Church, having now been transplanted from the world, there is no further let or hindrance to the dreadful wrath of a justly offended God.

Daniel further relates, that the kingdom of Christ shall be established on its ruins.* Accordingly, on the opening of the seventh trumpet, there were great voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever." And the elders respond to it, and give thanks to God, because he hath "taken to himself his great power, and hath reigned!"

The vision of the four wild beasts next claims attention in what it declares respecting *the finishing of the mystery of God*; and this being in immediate

*. See the Dissertation, ch. viii. p. 193—196.

reference to the end of the papacy, and the time times and an half, brings it more immediately in connection with its being thus called. For the 6th and 7th verses of chapter x., as much as say that, after the Lord Jesus Christ hath pronounced the time times and an half, to be no longer, *this* mystery of God shall be finished, as He hath declared to His servants the prophets.*

But the most particular mention of the last scenes of this mystery, is to be found in the last great vision of this eminent prophet, to the explanation of which, in the “Dissertation,” chapters xii., xiii., and xiv., the reader is referred. The coming judgments upon the world are there made indubitably to synchronize with those of the seventh trumpet, by being so expressly said to happen at “the time of the end,” by which is understood the end of the “little horn,” signifying the Mahometan power.† And so clear does this appear, that I conceive it is the same thing as if the Holy Spirit, instead of referring us to the prophets, had said, “And in the days of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the king of the south, and the king of the north, shall unite their forces against the kingdoms of the west; and the king of the south shall ‘push’ against them; but the king of the north shall come against them, “like a whirlwind, with a very great army and navy, and shall enter into the countries, and pass over.”‡

* See Diss. ch. x. † See Diss. ch. xi.

‡ Idem, ch. xiii. p. 343—363.

It is unnecessary to particularize further the Old Testament prophecies, where these things are mentioned. I cannot, however, but remark how very apparent these references show the exact harmony which subsists between the Old and New Testament prophecies, and what a weight of evidence each one gives to the other! The former, indeed, are not confined to Daniel; these things and times are alike spoken by the other prophets, particularly by Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Joel; and if in a less connected form, and less bearing directly upon and in connection with history, yet are their descriptions more vivid, varied, and profuse. We may close the whole of this part of the subject, by saying that the time will assuredly come, and must soon come, when it shall be said of the last trumpet, as it hath been said of all the former, "The seventh angel hath sounded!" AND GOD HATH BEEN FOUND TO BE AS GOOD AS HIS WORD!

But the onward course of events, as unfolded at this great crisis of time, will likewise bring about the finishing of the mystery of God, as he hath declared unto His servants the prophets, in the reward of the righteous, as well as in the punishment of the wicked. The four and twenty elders, in their song of thanksgiving, after praising God for having taken unto Himself His great power, and reigned; and after having proclaimed that the time of His wrath was come; now proceed to another most important transaction, which is to take place when the seventh trumpet shall sound—and that is, (ac-

according to what we find in Rev. xx.) THE RESURRECTION OF THE RIGHTEOUS DEAD! They say, “We give Thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because the season of the dead is come, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldst give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great.”

One allusion to this great event, in the Old Testament prophets, is in the 7th of Daniel, in connection with the destruction of the “little horn” of the papacy, where it is said, “*The ancient of days* DID SIT.” By this expression, we can only understand, that God Almighty will sit in judgment; and this description of the eternal Jehovah is given in words adapted to our comprehension, and it makes the following dread description more intelligible: “I beheld, till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool: His throne was like the fiery flame, and His wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued, and came forth from before Him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. THE JUDGMENT WAS SET, AND THE BOOKS WERE OPENED!” (Dan. vii. 9, 10.)

On the sitting of this judgment, the first thing noticed is, that because of the great and blasphemous words, “which the horn spake,”* (that is, be-

* Diss. ch. ix. p. 219, 263.

cause of the great blasphemy of the papal power against the Most High God,) what should first happen would be its destruction along with the nations which gave it power. "I beheld," says the prophet, "even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame," implying most certainly, that if the beast be slain and consumed, both the ten horns, as well as the little horn that sprung up among them, must share the same fate.

The next thing that follows this sitting in judgment, is the giving of the kingdom to Christ; and this is announced in the following sublime language. "Behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought Him near before Him: and there was given Him dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away; and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." It seems unnecessary to point out the exact harmony of these words, with what is said on the opening of the seventh trumpet, as the subject must be so fresh on the mind of the reader, and has been so frequently before us. I will therefore pass on to that which is more immediately under consideration, *the resurrection of the righteous dead*.

Speaking of the little horn that had "eyes, and a mouth that spake very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows," the prophet goes on to say; "I beheld, and the same horn made war with

the saints, and prevailed against them. *Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the Most High*; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom.”* From these words it is evident that at this time the saints will be judged and rewarded. Not a word is said about judgment being given to the wicked; therefore it cannot be the general judgment: and not indeed on this account only, but because it is *before* the end of the world; for another kingdom has yet to be established upon the earth, as it is written in ver. 27, “And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom, *under* the whole Heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him.”

It seems again almost unnecessary to notice how exactly all this coincides with what is explained to happen on the sounding of the seventh trumpet; when it is said, “the season of THE DEAD is come, that they should be judged, and that reward should be given to *all* the righteous dead—not only to His servants the prophets, but to the saints, and them that fear His name, *both small and great*.” The whole redeemed church therefore that at this time are in their graves, shall be judged, and enjoy a happy resurrection. These are no longer seen in heaven under the similitude of the four living creatures; and hence it is observable that it is only *the four-and-*

* Dan. vii. 21, 22; see likewise verses 26 and 27.

twenty Elders, who, on the opening of the seventh trumpet, fall down and worship God, thanking Him, among other things, for the resurrection of what St. Paul styles “the general assembly of the first-born,” not who *are* in heaven, but “who *are written* in heaven.”* With so much nicety and propriety, it may again be observed, are the characters chosen for the parts they are called upon to act in this great drama!

Daniel, however, likewise again notices, in his last “great vision,” the circumstance of this first resurrection; and shews that in its application to the Jews, it will extend to a portion of the wicked, as well as to the righteous. “Many of them,” he says, “that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.” For the observations upon this, see “Dissertation,” ch. xiii. p. 365—367.

The following are the sentiments on this subject of the immortal Toplady. In a speech made on a certain occasion, he said, “I am one of those old-fashioned people, Mr. President, who believe the doctrine of the Millennium: and that there will be two distinct Resurrections of the dead: 1st, of the just: and 2dly, of the unjust: which last Resurrection,

* Heb xii. 23.

of the Reprobate, will not commence till a thousand years after the Resurrection of the Elect. In the course of the present argument, I have been forced to take the doctrine of the Millennium for granted: time not allowing me to even intimate an hundredth part of the proof by which it is supported. I would only observe, to those who have not considered that subject, that it would be prudent in them to suspend their judgment about it, and not be too quick in determining against it, merely because it seems to lie out of the common road. As doctrines of this kind should not be admitted hastily, so they should not be rejected prematurely. Upon the whole, I give it as my opinion, that the reward of the saints, during the personal reign of Christ upon earth, will be greater or less in proportion to their respective labours, sufferings, and attainments: but that, seeing they are loved alike, with one and the same everlasting love of God the Father; that their names are in one and the same book of life; that they are all justified by the same perfect righteousness of Christ, redeemed and washed from all their sins in the blood of the same Saviour, regenerated by the same Spirit, made partakers of like precious faith, and will in the article of death be perfectly (and of course equally) sanctified by Divine grace; for these and other reasons that might be mentioned, I am clearly of opinion, that in the state of ultimate glory, they will be on a perfectly equal footing, with regard to final blessedness, both as to its nature and degree; and, as

the parable expresses it, 'receive every man his penny.' ”*

But there is another commanding event celebrated in this song of the elders, and that is *the destruction of those who destroy the earth*—in other words, the destruction of those who shall be made in the first instance the instruments of God's wrath. This “finishing of the mystery of God” was also *declared* unto his servants the prophets, and the particulars of it are more especially to be found in the prophecies of Ezekiel, which are brought forward as bearing upon the subject, in the Dissertation, chapter xiii., p. 359—365, explaining the termination of the career of the king of the North, mentioned by Daniel, ch. xi. 45 : “And he shall come to his end, and none shall help him.” A passage from Zechariah may also be quoted to the same effect, where, alluding to the Lord's destroying them which destroy the earth, he says, “Behold the day of the Lord cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle ; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished ; and half the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residence of the people shall not be cut off from the city. *Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations as when he fought in the day of battle.*”† It is on this occasion that the destruction will be so great, that

* See Toplady's Works, Vol. III. page 470.

† Zech. xiv. 1—3.

the children of Israel shall be seven months in burying their slain.* This fearful slaughter is likewise adverted to and described in the subsequent part of this book. (See Rev. xiv. 19, 20 ; and xix. 17—21.)

Thus far, all the information that has been given us respecting the contents and consequences of the sounding of the seventh trumpet, has been indirect or inferential. We are first directed by anticipation to the writings of the prophets, (ch. x. 7) ; then to what was said by the loud voices in heaven, as its ultimate results, (chap. xi. 15) ; and then to the subject matter of the Song of the four-and-twenty elders. We now however come to the direct description—

“ And the seventh Angel sounded ! And the Temple of God was opened in Heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his Testament. And there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.”

The thing that here attracts attention, and what indeed is of the most consequence for *us* to know, is, that on this sounding of the seventh trumpet, that which confirms all the preceding conclusions respecting the complete and glorious deliverance of the church by its translation to Heaven, is *first mentioned*. And the Temple of God—that “ Temple of God,” which in the beginning of the chapter it is said was measured, or enclosed, by the providence of

* Diss. ch. xiii. p. 360.

God, whilst the outer court was given up to the “Gentiles,”*—*was opened in Heaven!* And THERE was seen in His temple the ark of His Testament. We are to understand by all this, not only that the Temple of God, the Church of Christ, was now in heaven—not only that the worship of God, or the standing church, was transplanted from Earth to Heaven, but in that pure and holy temple Christ Himself was seen—that is, what was symbolized under the Jewish church by the Ark of the Testament, and concealed from public view, is now seen open and exposed. There are no longer any shadows, or seeing Christ as through a glass darkly, but we shall see, face to face, even as we are seen, and know as we are known! What I think we are chiefly to understand by it is, that during the sounding of the seventh trumpet there should be no temple of God on earth, but that it should be opened in Heaven. To this purpose was the voice from Heaven unto the two witnesses, saying, “Come up hither;” and the Church which had just ascended to Heaven in a cloud, in virtue of that call, was that great multitude which no man could number, out of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues, which stood before the throne, and before the Lamb; and which were constituted the Temple of God in Heaven.

After this mention of the safety of the church on the opening of the seventh trumpet, it is added, “And there were lightnings, and voices, and thun-

* Ch. xi. of this Work, p. 218.

derings, and an earthquake, and great hail." This is properly the subject matter of the trumpet itself, *as a trumpet*. All the rest are its concomitant circumstances, although circumstances of such magnitude that they overpower the event round which they concentrated. With regard to the symbols which represent it, they have all been already so particularly explained, that it must strike the mind of the reader at once, that they refer to the most dreadful wars and overturnings. An earthquake is again mentioned, which must be another great Revolution, distinct from the one which was said to happen just before the ceasing of the sixth trumpet, and which appears to have been confined to one of the ten kingdoms alone. To this, however, there is no such limitation; and it is undoubtedly that which is described in such fearful terms on the pouring out of the seventh vial—the time being the same; for this also happens immediately after the drying up of the Euphrates, or the gradual dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, described under the former vial.

The mention of this great earthquake is in both places followed by that of GREAT HAIL. In the latter instance (Rev. xvi. 21) it is thus expressed, "And there fell upon them a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great."

Now HAIL, as was explained in what was said under the first trumpet, signifies a furious invasion from the north, where natural hail is generated;

and, accordingly, *that* trumpet signified such an invasion, or rather invasions, from the Goths, and other barbarous tribes who inhabit the cold regions of the North. Therefore the mention of hail, and great hail, signifies the same thing in this instance;—it signifies the most furious and dreadful invasion from the same quarter! We will throw the whole into a connection, one part with another, and it will suffice to shew to the intelligent reader, from what human power the tremendous ruin will most probably come. On the fall of Constantinople, and the consequent extinction of the Turkish Empire, the second woe will be past. The third woe will come quickly after, and this will consist of an invasion from the Northern powers, in comparison, like the most dreadful hail-storm, the weight of each stone being a talent; so that men will blaspheme God on account thereof. In other words: “At the time of the end, the King of the North shall come like a whirlwind with a very great army both of horse and foot; and with many ships, and shall enter into the countries, and overflow, and pass over!” (Dan. xi. 40.)*

The following warning from Gibbon it would be well if our rulers and all of us would attend to, in connection with this most alarming prospect. Speaking of the overturning of the Western Empire by the Goths and Vandals, he says most truly, that the “awful Revolution which was the consequence, may be usefully applied to the present age.” And after

* Diss. ch. xiii.

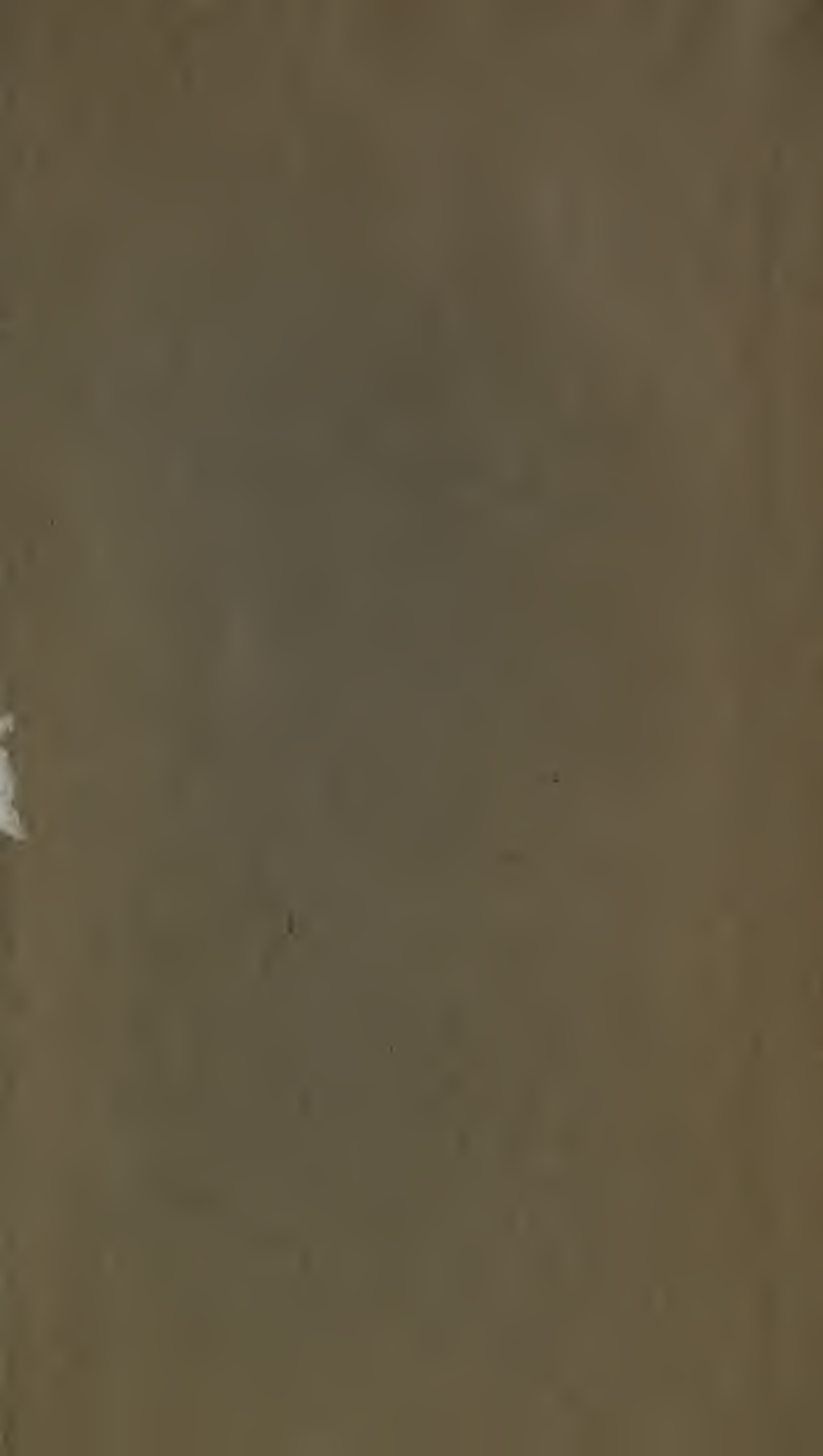
some observations on the then present state of the great nations of Europe, he adds, “ Yet this apparent security should not tempt us to forget, that new enemies, and unknown dangers, may *possibly* arise from some obscure people, scarcely visible in the map of the world. The Arabs, or Saracens, who spread their conquests from India to Spain, had languished in poverty and contempt, till Mahomet breathed into their savage bodies the soul of enthusiasm ;” * and, it may be added, accomplished the purposes of God in becoming the *first* woe. But enough has been hinted on this part of the subject. It is sufficient for us to know that God will not want instruments to perform His own work ; and that those instruments shall answer to the symbol which he has said they shall—viz., that of a great hail storm !

Thus will the seventh angel sound ! and its most dire effects will be found recorded in the three last verses of the 14th chapter ; in the contents of the seventh vials ; and in the 18th and 19th chapters of Revelation ; which include unspared vengeance alike upon the conquered and the conquerors—all being alike destitute of the seal of the living God upon their forehead !

“ And there were great voices in heaven, saying, THE KINGDOM OF THIS WORLD IS BECOME THE KINGDOM OF OUR LORD, AND OF HIS CHRIST ; AND HE SHALL REIGN FOR EVER AND EVER !”

* General Observations at the end of Chap. xxxviii.





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